

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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Capitalism means global poverty



GLOBALISE THE RESISTANCE

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Labour government: public enemy no 1

In 1997, the overwhelming majority of the left urged us to vote Labour. In the case of the SWP, members tell us they were 'ordered' to vote Labour. Now as the SWP bleats 'this is not what we voted Labour for', let us look at what they urged us to support.

In the first place a racist party Labour never made a secret of its support for immigration laws, or of its intention to enact more oppressive asylum legislation. Its support for Britain's imperialist interests was equally well advertised. The left was certainly urging us to vote for these, whatever hand-wringing there has been since over Yugoslavia.

The left also told us to vote for a party that is financed by big business and arms companies. The US arms multinational Raytheon is a Labour Party donor. It supplied the Tomahawks that were fired by the British submarine HMS Splendid on Yugoslavia. It also supplies Patriot missiles, and is now heading a consortium to supply five AWACS aircraft for £800m. The last Labour conference was sponsored by British Aerospace. Labour continued to export arms and Hawk aircraft to the Suharto regime in Indonesia as well as to fascist Turkey. Less well known is that it has agreed more than 500 arms export licences to India, and 128 to Pakistan. There is a long tradition of British arms dealers supplying both sides in any conflict, a tradition that Labour is happy to uphold.

Prior to the 1997 general election, FRFI constantly warned of Labour's totalitarian character, speaking of its 'social fascism'. In its determination to see Labour re-elected, the left made light of this. Now we see the results:

- Labour is even more enthusiastic in its use of 'gagging orders' than the Tories were. In its first two years it issued 50 Public Interest Immunity Certificates to prevent disclosure of state information in legal cases, compared to 30 in the last two years of the Tory government. Of these 50, the Northern Ireland Office has issued 28. The Ministry of Defence has issued seven (none in the last two years of the Tories). Robin Cook has just issued one to prevent Paul Greenglass suing Customs and Excise for malicious prosecution for his alleged role in the 'arms-to-Iraq' affair. In opposition, Cook roundly condemned the Tories' use of these gagging orders to cover up sales of arms to Iraq.

- A Freedom of Information Bill which is more restrictive than the current law. It will allow ministers to prevent the disclosure of information which 'would prejudice the effective government of public affairs'. A ruling once made could not be contested through judicial review. Parliamentary orders can be used to extend categories of information excluded from disclosure, thereby preventing any debate. The new Information Commissioner will not have the power to order release of information on public interest grounds. 'Commercially sensitive' information will be exempt from disclosure, no doubt to the great delight of Labour's big business friends. Canadian laws were used to reveal that US government officials had passed secret European Community reports on GM foods to Monsanto. Labour's Bill would prevent disclosure in these circumstances on grounds of 'commercial sensitivity'.

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• Labour wants to lock up so-called 'psychopaths' indefinitely even if they have committed no crime, despite all the difficulties associated with diagnosis. This has nothing to do with treatment, much more with a return to medievalism. The number of murders committed by those with mental disorders has consistently fallen over the last ten years, and is less than 10% of the total.

Labour's 'modernising government' policies themselves have a strong component of control of the public. FRFI has already pointed out how the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act requires the police, local authorities and the NHS to exchange information. The new Asylum Bill sets up a similar process between the police and the immigration service. 'Joined-up' government means joined-up information on us all.

Labour announced well before the 1997 general election that it was going to 'reform' state welfare. The left chose to ignore this. Herman's attack on lone parent benefits was the start. Now it is Incapacity Benefit. As a social insurance benefit, it should be universal. The Tories started to undermine this in 1995 by making it taxable and implementing the 'all work' test for eligibility. Labour's intention is to make anyone who has not made National Insurance contributions in the previous two years ineligible, and to means-test it for those receiving an occupational pension of more than £50 a week. The effect of these proposals will be to cut spending by £750m a year, and to redistribute a benefit from the poor to the very poor.

Labour's class character was not in doubt in 1997, whatever the left said at the time. Labour said what they were going to do, and now they are doing it. When Blair denounced public sector workers in a speech to the Venture Capitalist Association he displayed the arrogance of wealth and privilege. 'One of the things I would like to do, as well as stimulating more entrepreneurship in the private sector, is to get a bit of it into the public sector as well' he said. An example of this 'entrepreneurship' came the following week, when it was shown that top pay had risen on average 26% in 1998, compared with a 5% rise in average earnings. Meanwhile Volvo was exposed as having engaged in price fixing for many years. Was Volvo fined? Was it ordered to refund what it had stolen? Was the evidence obtained by the Office of Fair Trading put in the public domain? Of course not – we're talking multinationals here, and all the car manufacturers have been at it.

The left told us to vote for all of this. What does it offer us now? Socialist Review, the Socialist Workers' Party journal, tells us that 'Union leaders such as John Monks and John Edmonds are asking whether Labour has moved too far towards the middle ground. There are calls for a return to Labour's traditional policies from all sides'. So, 'Forward to Old Labour', 'Forward to Harold Wilson', 'Forward to John Monks'. What utter hypocrisy.

News

Education notes

Does the Railtrack Teacher of the Year use the Disneyland Reading Pack?

SUSAN DAVIDSON

The capitalist class needs the children of the working class to be both educated to a certain level and socially controlled. It is for this reason that they have supported the establishment of a universal, free school system and have underwritten its expenses by tax returns and keeping their hands off school property, land and capital input that they buy and sell as a right in the capitalist world.

Now private sector companies are making it clear that they want to make more money out of their investment in state education and in New Labour they have a government that supports and encourages them under the flag of entrepreneurship. They are positively delighted that worksheets should carry corporation logos and that lesson plans should be about 'real' world problems like the seating plans of a McDonald's outlet. They have no problem in dealing with firms familiar to working class children and notorious for their poor pay and conditions. Pizza Express pay catering staff below the minimum wage, claiming that customer tips keep them within the law and that they have long since formalised this system with the Inland Revenue, adding that staff prefer this method. Pizza Express is a part of the Whitbread Conglomerate which has an actively marketed education policy. Ofsted-approved lit-

eracy and numeracy packs are freely available to primary and secondary schools in attractively presented packs far superior to what schools could produce themselves.

Pragmatic head teachers appoint fund-raising staff to join in the hunt for freebies and improvement grants from anyone offering financial or material support. After all, endowments and private funding keep the private schools afloat, so the argument goes, so why not acknowledge that it's a material world? If kids in the USA are motivated by winning vouchers from the local burger chain, why not British kids? After all, times are very tough. The (free) Shell Guide to British Birds and British Petroleum Science Guides. The Dylon Colour Art posters cover up cracks in the walls and the Meat Industries Guide to British Farming ties in well with ICI's information on Chemical Fertiliser benefits together with free GCSE revision notes.

In a climate of bullying and naming and shaming, demands for academic improvement continue relentlessly and there is no money to improve. The government has called in a US firm, Hay Management Consultants, to prepare the way for Performance Related Pay (Payment by Results) for September 1999. This will create a crisis in the

recruitment and retention of experienced teachers in poor areas. It is no good looking to the government for help. Schools with the poorest pupils or the worst problems are losing out in an unfair lottery of competitive bidding for funding (TES report 4.6.99). 15,000 schools have failed to win bids from the £3bn distributed since May 1997, most of which has gone on school capital programmes involving building contracts and providing improved amenities for better-off pupils.

Parents in the inner cities where the education authorities and schools are 'failing' are also not really motivated to protest against 'privatisation'. All they want are decent resources and a pleasant and adequate environment for their children's education. A recent protest called by the local NUT against the privatisation of Islington School Services attracted almost no support despite the best efforts of the local SWP. The truth is that most working class residents are disgusted at the oversize classes and undersized facilities on offer in Islington schools. If McDonald's could do it better, then so be it, they could hardly do worse!

The truth, however, is that the business sector cannot do it better and has no interest in providing a service. All experience of 'privatising' the US school system has shown that class size increases while teachers' pay and exam results fall. Inefficiency, corruption and failure

are terms that the Labour government has worked hard to associate with the public sector. The reports from the USA show that these are the hallmark of the education business. All the corporations want to do is to push their products and soften up their future customers. All the government wants is to enforce flexible, low-pay contract working as the destination for poor people. What we see here is the expression on the real face of the capitalist state. When we talk about the state education system let us be quite clear: we will have to fight far harder than we have done. No more shock-horror at what the Labour government are doing. The demand for decent schooling for the working class is a battlecry against the interests of capital and its political representatives.

Frankenstein Foods: more to come

CATHERINE GOUGH

On Sunday 18 July, demonstrators damaged a 25 acre field of GM oilseed rape at 'Model Farm', Oxfordshire. About half the crop was destroyed. The Stop the Crop protest was organised by the Genetic Engineering Network at one of the largest of Britain's trial sites for genetically modified crops. Three people were arrested at the site, and the police have promised more arrests.

But it is clear that the government and its agribusiness bedfellows are losing the argument on GM foods. In July Marks and Spencer's and Sainsbury's announced that they had eliminated GM foods from their products and all the other large supermarkets pledged to follow suit. Consumers are clearly not prepared to be guinea pigs in a global experiment run by chemical companies like Monsanto aiming to dominate the world market in herbicides and pesticides. Concern has grown not only about the effects of GM foods on human beings, but also the consequences for the wider environment.

Although the government is less publicly gung-ho on the question, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries



(MAFF) is still peddling complacency. It is now clear that more extensive crop trials are planned for next year. In a document called a 'factsheet' and carried on 'The Biotechnology Knowledge Centre' website (sponsored by Monsanto!), MAFF's principle aim is to stifle questions. The magic formula intended to make the crop test sites acceptable is 'tightly controlled conditions'. All trial sites, they say, are designed to remove the risk of cross-pollination. The reality, however, is that the controls are minimal, the test sites are not rigorously inspected, and fines for breaching the controls are piddling. It was the same with the BSE/mad cow disease controls on abat-

No one can doubt that if the issue of GM foods ever comes before the WTO it will rule in favour of the multinationals, allowing the USA to impose its production processes on the world.

Monsanto has, however, fallen at a significant hurdle with regard to its BST (growth hormone) treated milk. Formerly, the United Nations food standards agency, Codex, was heavily infiltrated by representatives of the agribusiness multinationals, who stopped, for instance, effective labelling of GM foods. But at the beginning of July, Codex decided that BST-milk is a risk to human health, and this forced the USA to withdraw a pending action at the WTO. BST increases milk yield from cows by 10-15%. It also damages the health of cows and passes directly into humans who drink it, potentially causing breast and prostate cancers. Increased milk yield is not necessary either in the USA or Europe – both have a milk surplus. But this sort of rampant capitalism is not driven by need or human health, it is driven simply by market share and profits. The 'increased yields' offered by the USA, through hormone-treated milk and beef, or from genetic modification, will make us all sick.

June 18: media lies

MATTHEW MacDONALD

The numbers involved
Most mainstream newspapers gave the number of demonstrators as between 4,000-6,000. To anyone there on the day, this is risible. I'd estimate at least five times that number.

A minority of people caused the damage and riot
It seems incredible that so few people could have caused £2m worth of damage, been in so many places at once and required so large a police presence. *Innocent civilians were injured and targeted*

Completely untrue, as were reports in the *Daily Mirror*, *Telegraph* and *Mail* that protesters threw bottles at bystanders. Almost all injuries were suffered by protesters, despite newspaper talk of the horrifically injured brave bobbies'.

The damage caused had no purpose and was unjustified
The riot was said to be the work of a crowd 'fuelled by alcohol'. Why, then, were only some buildings damaged, such as Liffe, McDonald's and Mercedes? *Violence against the police was unprovoked*

Anyone who has been on any demonstration will find this hard to believe. The police started the fighting, not the demonstrators. After all, it was the police who had the shields, batons, horses and riot vans. Outside the Liffe building in particular, the police attacked the crowd and forced them to defend themselves.

Protesters used fake blood to feign violence
Why would they need it? Police ran over and hospitalised two people (one was trapped under a riot van for half an hour) and truncheoned hundreds more.

The greatest lie of all, however, was promoted by the *Daily Telegraph*'s editorial of 19 June which said that capitalism was the only force that could bring true freedom.



HANNAH CALLER & RICHARD ROQUES

On 18 June, as leaders of the G8 summit met in Cologne to ensure the wealth of the planet remains in the hands of a tiny minority, in 40 countries, from Brazil to occupied Palestine to Australia, protests took place against the barbaric nature of capitalism. In London the action started at 7.30am as 100 cyclists set off for the City of London, the financial centre of imperialist Britain. Within an hour our numbers had swelled to 500 bikers of every kind including one with wings that flapped 15 feet into the air as the pedals moved. City roads were taken over. Commuters in cars jeered and shouted – every minute representing millions of pounds of lost transactions. Cyclists urged them to take the day off and join the fun. At Bank, all roads were occupied to the sound of drums and whistles and the entrance to the Bank of England was surrounded as grim-faced bankers looked on.

It was clear the City was taking June 18 seriously; the Stock Exchange was closed and barricaded. It was only 10.30am and already hopes of bringing the City to a standstill looked promising.

At midday crowds began to gather outside Liverpool Street Station, our numbers swelling in the sweltering heat as a samba band played. Two daring protesters scaled a building to hang a banner reading 'Enough is enough!' A roar of approval went up from the crowd – a taste of things to come. Led by the cyclists, thousands followed to congregate on Dowgate Hill where a party was underway. There was juggling, dancing, sound systems and live music, children playing in the lake created by the four-storey fountain from the water hydrant and no room for cars or cops or City gents in the reclaimed city. Across Cannon Bridge the banner read: 'The earth is a common treasury for all'; further up North Thames Street, 'Revolution the only solution'.

We were there to oppose everything the City of London represents. The London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange (Liffe) had a row of security guards behind barriers. Our anger at capitalism's stranglehold over the lives of millions of people worldwide was enough to dislodge the barriers. The glass front of the building was smashed and protesters swarmed into the building as security guards stood by. When the police first arrived they were outnumbered and outmaneuvered and retreated. Other protesters built a wall of bricks and mortar and symbolically blocked another Liffe entrance.

By now the police had returned in riot gear, forcing the crowd back with truncheons and no mercy. But when finally the crowd – by now tens of thousands strong – appeared to leave over Southwark Bridge, it was only to reappear like a tide of rebellion to march triumphantly down the Strand and pour into Trafalgar Square to dance in the fountains, ignoring the

Bristol reclaims the streets

HELEN YAFFE

A message with a twist was broadcast from the pirate station Radio Interference on the night of 2 July as a warm-up to the next day's demonstration: 'We hope the troublemakers who attended the Reclaim the Streets in London will not be present in Bristol!' This was a reference to the aggressive police presence at London's June 18 protest.

But the police had no intention of staying away and surrounded the party protesters from the outset, intimidating us with horses, helicopters and cameras. Despite organisers' reassurances that the protest would be peaceful, the police had warned journalists to stay away. No sur-

prise, then, to discover the police had a vested interest in disturbing the peace – a leaflet claimed that if the protest remained peaceful Avon and Somerset police would have to foot the bill; if there was violence, London police would pay, on the assumption that RTS activists from London would be acting as professional rabble-rousers. The police would rather believe this conspiracy than recognise that civil 'disorder' is a national phenomenon.

Despite police numbers, we danced on, closing down two motorways. Unfortunately, the sound system was located too far away in St Paul's and taking the protest to the 'ghetto' was unacceptable to the police. They blocked us in with horses and vans and forced protesters back with frenzied truncheon waving. After hours sweltering in the sun with no shade and no water, protesters tried harder to push back the police lines. The police brought dogs and dropped all pretence of 'peace-keeping'. One pro-

tester, Toby Myers, reports: 'The police moved the horses towards me, sandwiching me between them so I was lifted off my feet. The woman cop on one horse grabbed me round the neck, squeezing my jugular. She said "I'll show you what we'll do if you wanna cause trouble, I'll show you what we'll do, I'll kill you".'

Finally the police blockade began to shuffle the protesters towards the park at St Paul's, the intended destination. The sound system had already been confiscated, so there was no party. As a result of police swarming the area and protesters running for an exit in residential streets, the local people were angry at what they saw as an invasion of their community. This is a recurring problem of Reclaim the Street demos and needs to be addressed. Next time let's take the mayhem up to the quiet, wealthy, tree-shaded streets of Clifton. Perhaps then the troublemakers in uniform will stay away?

Abdullah Ocalan: awaiting the emperor's signal

TREVOR RAYNE

The Turkish State Security Court pronounced the death sentence on the President of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) Abdullah Ocalan on 29 June. He was found guilty of damaging the sovereignty of the Turkish Republic and of separatism, which is punishable by death under Article 125 of the Turkish penal code. The published verdict found Ocalan's remorse over 30,000 deaths in the 15 years' war 'unconvincing'. PKK responsibility 'for killing thousands of innocent people' prohibited leniency. An appeal to the Turkish High Court of Appeals will be mounted.

Such is the judicial façade. Ocalan's fate hangs like that of a defeated gladiator's upon the whim of the emperor who has yet to give the signal for life or

death. The emperor will decide which best suits the interests of US imperialism.

Ocalan sought to use the trial to promote a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey. The Turkish state had his lawyers beaten up on the streets and in court. Three of Ocalan's lawyers were sentenced to imprisonment. The lawyers could not meet Ocalan in private and could not bring files, pens or paper to the prison. Before and after the trial hundreds of HADEP (a legal, mainly Kurdish political party) supporters were arrested and detained. On 25 April the Turkish Interior Minister banned the phrase 'people of Kurdish origin'. Reporters have to resort to 'our citizens who are called Kurdish by separatist circles' etc. Following the Ocalan verdict the Turkish army again invaded northern Iraq. On 21 July Turkish intelligence offi-



cers kidnapped Cevat Soysal, a National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK) official, from Moldova. However much Ocalan and the PKK may want a settlement, the Turkish state intends to press on until it has crushed Kurdish resistance.

In March the British government's Strategic Exports Control Report was published. It showed that British arms sales to Turkey are increasing under the Labour government compared to the Conservative government: missiles, sniper rifles, silencers, ammunition etc. This Labour government closed down the Kurdish MED-TV. Now it is considering granting export credits to Balfour Beatty plc to build the Ilisu dam in Turkey. This will force 20,000 Kurds from their homes, to add to the three million already driven out by the Turkish state's scorched earth policy.

Socialists in Britain demand an end to British government complicity in the war on the Kurds, an end to British arms sales to Turkey and defend the life of Abdullah Ocalan against the murderous Turkish and US states.

News

South Africa

ANC election victory

DALE T MCKINLEY

The recent South African general election shows that the ANC still commands overwhelming support amongst the poor and working class, who constitute the vast majority of the population. Such a situation is attributable to both the lack of any viable left alternative to the ANC, and a leadership (under Thabo Mbeki) that has shown itself particularly adept at keeping the loyalty of its constituency. However, the crucial issue is whether the new government can sustain this loyalty. In turn, this will depend on the degree to which the ANC is forced to substantively alter its neo-liberal, macro-economic programme, by the very poor and working class forces who have given it political power for another five years.

Victory of form over substance
At the opening of Parliament, Mbeki pledged that the ANC government would do all in its power to construct a 'caring' and 'people-centred society' that 'will be responsive to the needs of especially the poor'. His message was consistent with the ANC's Election Manifesto, which, ignoring the deeply unpopular neo-liberal framework adopted by the ANC government in 1996, promised:

- Strong state intervention to create jobs
- Increased social spending
- Public sector-driven delivery of basic services
- A restructuring of state assets that avoids mass lay-offs and wholesale privatisation
- A dynamic, participatory democracy to drive overall transformation

In the absence of any mass-based, left alternative, and helped by the reactionary campaigning of the right-wing opposition, a massive ANC victory was never really in doubt.

Capitalist course entrenched
The ANC's success has to be

measured against the 'other' reality: only days after telling the nation that the labour market was 'too flexible', Mbeki announced the need for a review of labour legislation to increase 'the competitiveness of our economy' (ie massive job losses and casualisation by increased labour 'flexibility').

Similarly, the promise of 'transformational restructuring' of the public sector has been quickly turned into a major 'downsizing exercise', with the likelihood of over 100,000 jobs being lost and an inability to deliver basic services to the masses. Neither has it taken long for the Mbeki government to send a clear message that it is he and his circle of political power-brokers and private sector 'consultants' who will make important policy decisions. So much for a participative democratic process. On the international front, the Mbeki government has made a speedy U-turn on previous opposition to Clinton's African Growth and Opportunity Act, signifying the acceptance of South Africa's role in making itself 'safe' for imperial corporate capital.

The gathering momentum of class struggle

The first two 'realities' have, of necessity, led to a third. As this is being written, unions are beginning to mobilise for serious mass action against the neo-liberal agenda of both the government and the private sector. Other progressive forces in the SACP and the broader left are also beginning to take on a wide range of issues that affect the lives of the working class and poor. There will be the need to combine these different forms of struggle and give them an anti-capitalist thrust. The current situation demands more than ever that the forces of the working class and poor openly propagate and explicitly organise for their class interests. All those who are daily being crushed by the class realities of capitalism will surely welcome this.

Iran: The revolution is coming

The overthrow of the Shah in 1979 was one of the most popular revolutions of the 20th century, with millions of people taking part. Its tone was anti-imperialist and its content democratic. The left made its mark through anti-imperialist slogans against the USA and capitalism in general, but lacked any specific programme for transformation of social and political structures. The left at the time was influenced by guerrilla movements in Latin America and experiences of China and the Soviet Union, but had little contact with the workers who were the social base of the revolution.

Khomeini, a shrewd politician, placed himself at the helm of the revolution and hijacked the anti-imperialist slogan from the left by taking over the US Embassy in Tehran. He forced the left and the masses to accept his lead, which amounted to little more than spitting on and burning the US flag. Khomeini called this the second revolution.

Then came the October Surprise - Khomeini's conspiracy with Ronald Reagan's election team and elements of the CIA against President Carter's re-election bid. This involved a request by the Reagan team not to release the US hostages during Carter's presidency in order to weaken his campaign. Meanwhile, Reagan promised that all the hostages would be released within a week of his election. In return, Reagan offered to release Iranian military and financial assets. Many on the left in Iran were taken by surprise when the Irangate episode was exposed and the 'anti-imperialist' Islamic regime was found to be conspiring with the CIA, Israel and CIA-backed Contras in Nicaragua.

In the 20 years since the Islamic counter-revolution, the regime has murdered close to 100,000 political prisoners from many communist, socialist and left groups as well as from Moja-



bedin, a religious group. Their tormentors raped every woman and teenage girl facing the firing squad.¹ Women have been degraded to second-class citizens. All workers' associations, including shuras or workers' councils, were disbanded and thousands of activists in the factories killed. The level of real wages fell from \$11 to \$1 a day.²

Today in Iran there is not a single independent union, no collective bargaining and strike action is illegal. Attacks against national minorities like the Kurds and religious minorities continue unabated. The war with Iraq to export Islamic counter-revolution to the region also brought devastation, a million dead or injured and a total damage of \$500 billion.

In the past four years we have witnessed spontaneous uprisings in Tehran-Islamshahr, Ghazvin, Arak, Tabriz, Mashad, Shiraz, Kurdistan, and Baluchestan, practically covering every major industrial section of the country. In many of these uprisings tens of thousands took part and fought against the Islamic Guards and the Basij and other Islamic vigilantes called Hezbollah. To suppress these mass uprisings - whose leaders the Islamic regime called 'paid agents of the Great Satan USA and Israel' - tanks, machine guns, and helicopter gunships were used against civilians.

In this same period the Islamic regime initiated an IMF and World Bank Economic

Structural Reform Program. The results were falling oil prices, increasing foreign debt - around \$30 to \$40 billion - large military expenditure, negative growth rates and negative investment for the entire 20 years after the overthrow of the Shah. Islamic economics have pushed per capita production and income down to the levels of forty years ago.³

The Central Bank of Iran announced this week that in the current fiscal year it will be forced to reschedule part of its debt and the interest; it is now defaulting on a total of \$7.6 billion. This represents about 50% of total annual revenue from the oil sector, which brings in 98% of foreign exchange. Unemployment stands at over 50% and inflation has been running at 10,000%. These are just some of the underlying social and economic factors behind the present revolutionary crisis.

Workers are mobilising in the factories, students in the universities and a million unemployed on the streets. Workers have taken bosses hostage, in order to get wages owed for a year. Barricades erected by the workers and fighting against the Islamic Guards have become a norm of the workers' struggle. I recently received a report from Iran that oil workers have called for a national strike, and electricity and water industry workers support the strike action.⁴ In the 1979 revolution, the support of the water and electricity

industry workers for the oil workers' strike was crucial.

In the past few months two liberal opposition leaders - Parvaneh Forouhar, a woman of 70, and her husband Daryush Forouhar, of the National Front - and five other writers and intellectuals have been butchered in Tehran by YAVAK, the state security forces. State officials admitted the killings but argued that the CIA and Israel must have planned the murders to weaken the Islamic regime!

Over the last few months, students throughout Iran have opposed a new anti-democratic law, demanded freedom for political prisoners and the prosecution of the murderers. On 9 July a moderate pro-Islamic paper was closed for publishing a letter from one of the killers. Students led a demonstration in support of that paper. Then the security forces and the vigilantes attacked the university dormitories at 3am on 10 July, four students were killed, many injured and 1,400 arrested. This led to an uprising which within six days had spread through the whole country. It was quickly radicalised by associating calls for prosecution of the murderers with the demand for the removal of the so-called spiritual leader of the Islamic regime, Khamenei. In more than ten major cities, thousands came in the streets in support of students' demands.⁵ That uprising was bloodily suppressed, but this is the beginning of the coming revolution in Iran.

Reza Ghaffari

1 R. Ghaffari, *An eyewitness Report of Islamic Regime's Prisons in Iran*.

2 R. Ghaffari, *The Economic Consequences of Islamic Fundamentalism in Iran, The Political Economy of Islamic Regime of Iran: 1979-1994 Capital and Class* No. 56 summer 1995, pp106-107.

3 Ibid, pp105 and 112.

4 BBC World Service, Persian language Broadcasting at 6.00pm, 19 July 1999.

5 *The Economist* reported the coming revolution in Iran by the Iranian students.

Colombia: guerrilla offensive

MIKE WEBBER

Guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) have taken the offensive against the brutal Colombian regime of Andres Pastrana. The offensive began on 8 July, when 500 rebels overran an army camp south-west of Bogota.

According to Martin Hodgson, *The Guardian* 13 July, 'the guerrillas may be poised to attack the country's main regional cities and accomplish their long-term plan of surrounding the capital Bogota. In the last days of fighting the rebels have attacked 24 police stations, sacked banks, blocked roads and dynamited an oil pipeline'.

A measure of the regime's desperation may be gleaned from the fact that last year the head of the armed forces said 'he would accept any kind of US

military assistance, including atomic bombs. Colombia is already the biggest recipient of US military assistance in the hemisphere. The US Southern Command Chief has already declared that 'we are mindful of our obligation to intervene, either co-operating with the Panamanians or independently if the conditions dictate'.

Official statistics give some indication of what large sections of the Colombian working class and peasantry are fighting. The top 3% of Colombia's landed elite own over 70% of arable land, while 57% of the poorest farmers subsist on less than 3%. 40% of Colombians live in absolute poverty, unable to satisfy basic needs. 4.5 million children under 14 are hungry - that is, one in every two. The country's exploiters do very well out of this human misery. The cocaine cartels, upon which 70% of the population depends

directly or indirectly for employment, are so wealthy that in the 1980s they offered to pay off the country's foreign debt.

The US military claims that FARC and ELN work hand-in-hand with the drug traffickers. The fact is that while the guerrillas protect the livelihoods of poor peasants unable to make a living any other way, the cartels support the fascistic death squads, an integral part of the regime's counter-insurgency effort. BP employs these para-military forces in Casas Viejas province to suppress any trade union organising efforts in its oilfields, with members of the workers' trade union (USO) being kidnapped, tortured and killed.

None of this hindered New Labour from appointing BP's chief executive Lord David Simon as Minister of Trade and Competitiveness within a few days of being elected.

Freedom for Kashmir

ROBERT CLOUGH

The prospect of war between two nuclear powers is terrifying, but for a period over this summer the threat was very real, as Indian and Pakistani armies battled over the future of Kashmir. Intense diplomatic efforts have averted it for the moment, but the possibility of future bloody conflict remains.

At the root lies the partition that accompanied independence in August 1947. The claims of Pakistan to include Kashmir with its Muslim majority were thwarted by Kashmir's ruler, the Hindu Sheikh Abdullah. The newly-formed Pakistan army failed to reach the Kashmiri capital Srinagar before the Indian army, and Kashmir became the only Indian state with a Muslim majority. But India's promises for a referendum on Kashmir's future, agreed with the UN in 1948, were never fulfilled.

In 1988-90, frustrated at India's unwillingness to hold the plebiscite promised 40 years earlier, opposition movements in Indian-occupied Kashmir organised mass demonstrations demanding independence. The Indian army responded with brutality: hundreds were shot down, and thousands imprisoned. Armed resistance was born. Since then, India has acted as a ruthless army of occupation, while Pakistan has given military support to sections of the opposition. Last summer, both India and Pakistan held nuclear tests in a bout of sabre rattling.

The latest round in the conflict started in May when a mixed force of Muslim fundamentalists and Pakistani infantry crossed the partition line at its highest points near Kargil, occupying Indian army bunkers. Attempts by the Indian army to evict them proved fruitless: hundreds of soldiers died as they tried to ascend mountain

sides at heights of over 5,000 metres. Artillery bombardment sparked off fighting along the 450-mile front, and on 26 May the Indian air force launched bombing attacks. Lack of progress by early June raised the real prospect of an Indian crossing of the partition line in order to cut off supply routes to the bunkers. All-out war would have ensued, with the threat of nuclear war if it went badly for either side.

Intense diplomatic pressure from China and the US, long-term allies of Pakistan, prevented further escalation. In early July, Pakistan announced the withdrawal of its troops from the disputed peaks. The Kashmiri question remains unresolved and neither India nor Pakistan can play a progressive role. FRFI calls for a complete withdrawal of troops and supports the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination.

Asylum notes

Deportations

According to the latest available figures on deportations and detentions, in April 1998, 405 people were deported from the UK and a further 2,360 were refused entry and forcibly removed. In 1998 there were 7,385 deportations and 27,590 forcible removals. On 31 May 1999 there were 862 people detained solely under the powers of the Immigration Act. 182 of them were held at Campsfield House; 142 at Tinsley House; 91 at Harmondsworth; the remainder were scattered throughout detention centres at airports and ports and in prisons and police stations across the country.



The Immigration and Asylum Act

The latest pernicious attempt to keep refugees and immigrants out of Britain had its third reading in the House of Commons on 16 June. Following pressure from 'left' MPs and others, the government amended its original proposal (to cut cash benefits to those claiming asylum to £1 per day for adults and 50p for children) to allow them to claim £10 per week per person. Big deal! - the £3 extra for adults and £8.50 for children will still be deducted from the total benefits allocated in both cash and vouchers.

The only other minor 'concessions' at the Bill's third reading were ones which campaigners had fought hard for for many years: a reduction in the years of 'prior cohabitation' demanded for unmarried partners from four to two, and an end to the deportation of women whose marriages collapse in their initial 12-month 'probationary period' due to domestic violence.

Only 41 out of 351 MPs voted against the Bill and it has now gone to the House of Lords prior to returning to the Commons where it will certainly become law.

Big winners from vouchers

However big or small the voucher component in the meagre benefits handed out to asylum-seekers eventually turns out to be, the only winners from the system will be the supermarkets. Many refugees have already been handed vouchers which are only redeemable at one specific outlet, with most local authorities either choosing Tesco or Sainsbury's.

Asylum-seekers fight back

Immigration detainees continue to resist, especially at Group 4-run Campsfield House, where on 8 June, 50 detainees went on hunger-strike and later the same month two asylum-seekers granted themselves permanent admission to the UK via a back window!

Nicki Jamison

TGWU launch witchhunt against Nigel Cook

Two years after Nigel Cook was sacked for organising workers into the TGWU at the sweatshop where he worked, his union are trying to kick him out.

Nigel is still being denied victimisation benefit. Bill Morris, T&G General Secretary, and the Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP) refused Nigel's claim without giving any reason. The northwest F&GP (Region 6) had supported Nigel's claim and in February 1998 wrote to Bill Morris asking for victimisation benefit to be paid. On 20 November the Reinstigate Nigel Cook Campaign (RNCC) went to the Region 6 F&GP meeting to demand they challenge Morris' decision not to pay the benefit. When the F&GP refused to meet with Nigel, the RNCC supporters held a sit-in at its office.

On 31 March 1999 Dave McCall, T&G Regional Secretary, wrote to Nigel threatening: 'It is now my intention to pursue a formal statement of complaint against you... Your conduct on 20 November 1998 violated our working rules... and that you harassed members of staff.'

McCall has now ordered Nigel to attend an initial disciplinary hearing in Manchester. The accusation of harassment is a lie



which we wholly refute.

If McCall and the F&GP are really concerned about 'our working rules' why won't they challenge Morris' blocking of the TGWU rule, schedule 11 (g) which guarantees that all 'members who are victimised shall be entitled to benefit'?

The charges against Nigel come six months after the event and coincide with the forthcoming release from administration of M&S Packaging, the company which sacked Nigel. At precisely the time when the union is able to fight on his behalf, it is instead attacking him.

If Nigel is thrown out of the union, it won't have to represent him at any forthcoming industrial tribunal. This goes against the commitment made

to Nigel when the T&G withdrew legal support and attempted to have his industrial tribunal case withdrawn, without his agreement, rather than challenge the bankruptcy laws that prevented his case from being heard at a tribunal two years ago.

Help stop this witch hunt! Send letters of protest to Bill Morris, Transport House, Palace St, London SW1E 5JD or Dave McCall, Transport House, Salford Quays, Manchester M5 2SG. If you are in the TGWU, raise it at your branch meeting. Or let your union know what is happening in the T&G. Get your organisation to send letters of protest to the T&G and letters of support and solidarity to Nigel. Help us publicise what is going on and send details of anyone who can help us to legally challenge the decisions of Morris and the T&G. Please send us copies of any letters you send or receive. If you can afford a donation it would be greatly appreciated. ■

Fighting Poverty Pay Campaign
PO Box 14, Accrington, Lancs BB5 1GG
Tel/Fax 01254 679605
e-mail: mng@skyusa.co.uk
New Fighting Poverty Pay newsletter available from campaign address.

SkyChefs' strike: a familiar tale of T&G betrayal

LIZ TULLY

Lufthansa SkyChefs, a German/US multinational, controls the lion's share of the £5bn airline catering industry. It deliberately provoked a strike at London's Heathrow airport and then, six hours into the 24-hour official strike on 20 November 1998, sacked the entire striking workforce. In choosing their Heathrow plant, rather than Gatwick or Manchester, SkyChefs may have calculated that, with the overwhelming majority of their workforce Asian women, many of whom do not speak English, they would be easy to defeat. But for the last eight months, the strikers have heroically maintained a 24-hour picket outside

the factory gate - despite the shameful lack of support from their union, the TGWU.

The substance of the dispute is the imposition of more labour-intensive working practices which compromise health and safety, eliminate overtime payments and give management the right to compel workers to labour up to 60 hours a week. The T&G agreed to this 'productivity deal' on the basis that the workers would get a share of the profits or abandon the trial. It can hardly have come as a surprise that once the practices were established, management reneged on the deal and imposed the new terms and conditions against the will of the workforce. Since then the T&G have effectively isolated the strikers

by preventing contact with T&G shop stewards, hijacking the strike committee, destroying the SkyChefs support group and recommending that workers at other airline catering companies accept the new deal rejected by the SkyChefs workers. Meanwhile, they recommend passively awaiting the rulings of the Industrial tribunal. Tell that to the Hillingdon women, two miles up the road and now in the fourth year of their strike, who have won every tribunal and still haven't been reinstated! This is a story of blatant betrayal by the T&G. ■

Show your support for the SkyChefs strikers by joining their picket line at Faggs Road (five minutes from Heston tube station).

Workers' solidarity wins out

MARK METCALF

On 7 July, solidarity between immigrant and British workers achieved victory for builders employed on a site in Waterloo.

The previous week 300 mechanical installers and pipe fitters working for subcontractors Dahl Jenson found their wage cheques, including massive amounts of overtime, had bounced. Dahl Jenson had vanished.

The workers approached the Joint Sites Committee and the builders' union, UCATT, was informed. Action was planned for 7 July; the leaflet stated: 'No work will take place on this site until all the building workers

are paid the money they have worked for'. There were hundreds of workers on the site, working for other firms, some for as little as £3 an hour. They included Korean, Albanian, Latvian, Russian, Portuguese and French workers. Add this to the English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish Dahl Jenson workers and you had quite a mix. The question was would they respect the Dahl Jenson picket line? Would all the workers be able to set aside their prejudices and differences in a common struggle?

Many workers desperately needed the money or were pressurised by their bosses to cross the picket line, but almost all respected the picket. By 8.30am

there were 300 picketers on the gate, no work was taking place, deliveries were being turned away and machinery was idle.

A couple of hours later, Bouynes, the company in charge of the site, agreed to pay the Dahl Jenson workers two weeks' wages and consider them for any jobs on the site. They also said there would be no victimisation of the picketers.

It is clear that organised workers can win, that anti-trade union laws can and must be defeated and that solidarity between workers of different nationalities can be forged in struggle. ■

This article has been cut, for reasons of space, from a longer analysis of the lessons of the dispute.



Remember the Liverpool dockers - another T&G sell-out

In these days when so little political drama or social realism is shown on television, the Channel 4 screening of *Dockers* was viewed with much interest. Not least because the programme was written by the sacked men and their supporters in Women of the Waterfront, with help from writers Jimmy McGovern and Irvine Welsh. The result was a drama which served as a moving reminder of the impact made on the lives of those involved in such disputes, not just the dockers but, for example, the sacked Tameside carworkers and the SkyChefs strikers.

We see the scales fall from the eyes of the most faithful of union supporters as one event after another reveals the union to be a wolf in sheep's clothing. The lack of support for the strike for fear of the union being sued, the fact revealed in the House of Commons - that T&G official Jack Dempsey turned down a Torside boss's offer to reinstate five sacked men on the first day of the dispute, the refusal to call for international solidarity - are powerful testimony of the union's betrayal.



John Prescott drenched by supporters of the Liverpool Dockers at the rally.

there is the struggle to hold onto jobs and hard-won rights under the increasing threat of casualisation and the introduction of cheap labour.

As events unfold, we witness the solidarity between the Seaford registered dockers and the Torside men (around whom the dispute originated) overcome the friction that had existed due to differences in contracts. The sacking of the Seaford men, resulting from their decision not to cross the picket line, comes as no surprise to the men involved, although it is a sickening blow - the first of many.

The strain of the dispute on families and friendships is clearly illustrated around the central character Tommy Walton (played by Ken Stott), whose lifelong friend Macca (Ricky Tomlinson) turns scab because of his lack of faith in the strike. Macca is in turn

In his address to the T&G congress, Jimmy Nolan (Peter Armitage) makes a rousing speech about the basic tenets on which the union was built, describing how 'the strength of the many will protect the few'. With the dockers eventually left out in the cold and the union leadership being escorted away in their chauffeur-driven Jaguars, this phrase takes on a magnificent irony.

Unfortunately, this is not simply a case of weak T&G leadership, as the condemnation of Bill Morris might imply. Those of us who have been active in other struggles, like that of Nigel Cook can only draw the conclusion that while the unions beat that their hands are tied by anti-union legislation, they are in fact working towards their own agenda. What was that phrase? 'The strength of the many will protect the few.'

Katy Suggitt

Cuba: in the frontline against imperialism

Imperialism's barbaric onslaught on the former Yugoslavia provoked a clear split amongst the so-called progressive forces of the world. On the one side stood those who avidly applauded imperialism's war aims, dressed up in the hypocritical language of humanitarian aid. On the other, apparently isolated but in fact representing the mass of humanity, those who denounced imperialist warmongering. Loudest and most consistent amongst these was Cuba.



8 October 1976: families of those killed when CIA-backed agents blew up a civilian Cubana flight mourn the 73 dead. The human toll of US aggression against Cuba continues to this day.

From the outset Cuba publicly denounced NATO and described the war as one intended to strengthen US domination over the world. It condemned the UN for lying supine while the bombing went ahead (see FRFI 149). As the war ended, the government of Cuba issued a blow-by-blow account of the Serbian casualties suffered in over 70 days of NATO bombing and called publicly for Javier Solana, Secretary General of NATO to be indicted as a war criminal. As Cuba's ambassador to the UN remarked, 'history will never pardon the phrase "collateral damage" which has been employed so much in recent months to refer to the destroyed bodies of innocent children.' Of perhaps even greater significance was an explicit denunciation of the political character of social democracy as 'the modern right', reprinted in *Granma* from *Le Monde Diplomatique* on 16 May. The article attacks in particular Solana, a long-standing leader of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party and Gerhard Schroeder, Lionel Jospin, Massimo D'Alema and Tony Blair, social democratic heads of government of Germany, France, Italy and Britain. It warns: 'Today they are making war on Serbia and tomorrow they could make war on the suburbs of our cities, in the name of "realism".'

Such statements mark at the very least a radical change of tone, if not of policy, given that as little as a year ago, various pronouncements from the Cuban leadership seemed to suggest a rapprochement with bourgeois forces. In seeking unity, Castro insisted they must not 'introduce ideological problems'. The battle for the survival of the world should unite 'those who have a lot of resources and those who have very few... people of every social class and religion.' To understand this shift, it is necessary to examine the current political context and the realignment of forces brought to a head by the NATO war.

- developing a 'Cuban communist terror campaign' in the Miami area, including widely-publicised attempts on lives of Cuban refugees in the US
- simulating a Cuban-based, Castro-supported filibuster against a neighbouring Caribbean nation
- shooting down a civilian flight and blaming Cuba

And so on. What was clear at the time was that a US invasion of Cuba was imminent. It was in these circumstances that Cuba willingly accepted Soviet missiles onto its territory in 1962. There is no doubt that only the resolution of that crisis – with the US undertaking to the USSR not to invade Cuba – guaranteed the island's safety over the next 29 years.

But with the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Cuba found itself politically isolated and on the brink of economic crisis. Already by 1992, following the Gulf War, Colin Powell was boasting that 'Cuba and Ho Chi Minh City would be next'. Where could Cuba look to guarantee its security? It began to reach out to social democratic forces in Europe and north America to cement desperately-needed trade deals and offers of investment. Inevitably, public pronouncements began to reflect the need for strong economic ties. There will undoubtedly have been those within the Cuban Communist Party who saw a political alliance with

social democracy as the way forward. It took the war in Yugoslavia to expose that hope as a delusion.

The war revealed social democracy in its true colours as leaders like Blair of Britain and Schroeder of Germany proved enthusiastic cheerleaders for NATO's mission. When long-standing trading partners like Britain, France and Canada lined up with the US at the United Nations Human Rights Commission to condemn Cuba – by one vote – for human rights abuses, the rift was complete. For that vote was more than simply to punish Cuba for opposing the war. It represents a dangerous additional weapon in the US arsenal; when imperialism goes to war, it cloaks its bloody aims in the language of human rights.

NATO's war showed, too, the impotence of the United Nations. Since the end of the second world war, war against a sovereign state has been deemed illegal by the UN except as an act of self-defence. NATO blatantly disregarded international law, and the United Nations proved powerless to stop them.

Meanwhile, the USA is cranking up its propaganda machine to report a social, political and economic crisis in Cuba and warning of maritime borders being opened by Cuba to promote a mass exodus. At the same time it is pushing the Organisation of American States to create a 'group of friends' to intervene if 'democracy' is threatened in any of the member nations. No wonder Cuba feels under threat. As Castro pointed out 'The US is constantly provoking and inventing things against Cuba, trying to create conflicts within our country... that would justify monstrous crimes like those it has just committed against the Serbian people... We're not going to do anything foolish that would serve as a pretext for them.'

(11 June 1999)

A new alliance

Cuba's public stance is a rallying call against imperialism. However, despite a powerful potential ally in China, which opposed the NATO war and sees itself threatened by imperialism, Cuba remains comparatively isolated.

It therefore remains driven by the

need to forge new alliances, to create new anti-imperialist blocs, while maintaining an uncompromising political position. The appointment of a new Foreign Secretary, Felipe Perez Roque reflects this trend. *Granma* reported that the decision took into account 'the complex and tense international scenario, its growing importance for the future of Cuba and the world and the necessity for a more profound, rigorous, systematic and demanding work in this area.'

Much of Cuba's efforts have been directed to the other states of Latin America and the Caribbean, where suspicion of the USA is running high in the wake of its 'group of friends' proposal. As the minister for Peru pointed out at the OAS, such a group would be allowed to interfere in a state supposedly in conflict, without that state's prior approval. The US has also recently performed illegal tests of uranium-loaded bombs on a base in Puerto Rico, where one person died and four were injured. Cuba has recently had visits from leaders of Haiti and the Bahamas and received warm support from Colombia and Honduras for its medical aid. The rapprochement is producing a flurry of trade deals and agreements and strengthening economic and political support for Cuba in the region.

In addition, Cuba is seeing improvements in its own economy, with 2.5% economic growth predicted and a sugar harvest that surpassed its target for the first time since the start of the special period. At the same time domestic oil production is exceeding all expectations, with the possibility that Cuban oil will supply 50% of the country's needs within the next five years, and a nuclear power station on the south coast is to be completed shortly.

All these improvements offer Cuba a little breathing space. But in the longer term, in the words of the *Monde Diplomatique* article, 'the left will have to reinvent itself. Until communists the world over take up Cuba's challenge to imperialism and its ally, social democracy, the threat to Cuba will remain.'

Tania Jackson in Havana
and Cat Wiener

Boycott Bacardi

Bacardi's recent court victory in New York, over its right to use the Havana Club trademark to market its anything-but-Cuban rum in the United States, shows the depths of complicity between this rapacious and anti-Cuban company and the US government.

Although the blockade means Cuban rum cannot be sold in the USA, in 1974 Cubaexport registered the Havana Club trademark there to prevent its use by other companies. The rights to the trademark were bought by the French company Pernod Ricard when it set up a joint venture with Havana Club holdings in 1994 – in the face of threatening letters from Bacardi.

In 1996, Bacardi started illegally marketing its own Havana Club. Pernod Ricard sued. But, thanks to section 211, hastily tacked onto last year's US budget law after frantic lobbying by Bacardi's lawyers, Bacardi won. Section 211 arbitrarily stipulates that no court in the US may recognise or in any way validate any claim regarding trademarks and commercial names related to properties 'confiscated' by the Cuban government. Bacardi claims Havana Club uses former Bacardi assets nationalised by Cuba in 1960. Section 211 contravenes international trade

law, and Pernod Ricard is taking the case to the World Trade Organisation. As Castro pointed out 'I hope no one will now complain if we start marketing a Cuban Coca-Cola.'

Despite widespread propaganda making much of its Cuban roots, it is well-known that the Bacardi family, having made its fortune from the exploitation of sugar-workers in pre-revolutionary Cuba, fled in 1959 and has remained the sworn enemy of the Revolution ever since. Its lawyer, Ignacio Sanchez, a member of the

violently counter-revolutionary Miami-based Cuba-American Foundation (CANF) helped draft key sections of the Helms-Burton Act. Bacardi is a principal backer of CANF.

There has never been a better time to boycott Bacardi and expose its counter-revolutionary role. Friday 13 August sees Rock around the Blockade's official launch of our boycott campaign, with a day of action planned (see p14 for details). With stickers, petitions and leaflets, we will be calling on individuals and organisations to boycott all Bacardi products, drink Havana Club instead and hit Bacardi where it hurts – in its profits!

Debunking Bacardi lies

Myth: 'After 98 years of existence in Cuba, the Cuban assets of Compania Ron Bacardi SA were illegally confiscated by Cuba's totalitarian regime. The Bacardi family, along with thousands of their countrymen, fled the island nation as exiles.'

Fact: Those who fled Cuba in 1959 were cronies and henchmen of the hated Batista regime. When Cuba's revolutionary government nationalised Bacardi's assets in 1960, the company refused offers of compensation.

Myth: 'Before the revolution there was a fun-loving place in Cuba where all things blended together to create the perfect atmosphere... where elegance and good taste reigned... Havana was an attraction for tourists and dignitaries the world over.'

Fact: Pre-revolutionary Havana was a brothel and casino for US playboys and a rich Cuban elite. While Bacardi amassed assets worth \$67m, the majority of Cuba's largely rural population lived in shacks without running water or electricity, a third were unemployed or semi-employed and 43% were illiterate.

From 24 March to 9 June the 19 countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) attempted to smash Yugoslavia back to a pre-industrial condition. NATO claims to have achieved a great success. It has sown ruin and calls it peace. The tensions that gave rise to the war remain unresolved. Future wars are being planned. Unless the war-mongers are challenged and defeated the planet is in peril. TREVOR RAYNE reports on the aftermath of the latest Balkan war.

'When people ask us how much damage we did, my answer to that is "enough". We did enough.'

British Defence Secretary George Robertson

- Yugoslavia was subjected to approximately 35,000 air sorties, thousands of cruise missiles (NATO gives no figure) and over 35,000 cluster, graphite, depleted uranium etc, bombs. About 2,000 civilians were killed and 8,000 injured by the bombardment. 400-600 Yugoslav soldiers were killed.
- Over 850,000 Kosovar Albanians and 150,000 Serbs were made refugees.
- Damage to Yugoslavia is put at \$100-150 billion. The Economist Intelligence Unit forecasts Serbian gross domestic product will fall 40% this year, Macedonia's 15% and the regional output by 3.8%.
- 400 Yugoslav schools were hit and a similar number of medical units and hospitals.
- Estimates of the number of bridges destroyed vary from 50 to 150.
- The United Nations High Commission for Refugees calculates between 10%-20% of homes in Kosovo have been damaged.

This is the reality of the 'humanitarian war', so carefully sanitised for our viewing and approval. Targeting quickly shifted from the Yugoslav military to civilians and civilian infrastructure: factories, water and power plants, social facilities. Damage to the Yugoslav power grid is over \$160 million. Disputes within NATO were about the rate of destruction, not the targets themselves.

As we have seen from the war on Iraq, (which the USA and Britain bombed every day of the Balkan war) casualties of NATO's Balkan war will continue to rise. Toxic chemicals from destroyed factories and power plants are seeping into the food chain. The Danube River east of Novi Sad is dead. Depleted Uranium bombs spread radioactive poison causing cancers, birth defects, fatal nerve and liver diseases. Radioactive air pollution is detected in Yugoslavia by a team working for the European Commission. Hospitals that once treated the sick are unable to function and patients are dying.

Before the disintegration of Albania, when the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) seized weapons in 1990, the number of people killed in ethnic conflict in Kosovo averaged ten a year. In 1997, 15 people were killed in ethnic strife. In the year before NATO's assault United Nation's (UN) figures showed the number of Kosovar Albanian and Serb deaths to be roughly equal, around 2,000. During the 78-day attack 10,000 Kosovar Albanians are believed to have been killed by Yugoslav forces and Serb irregulars. On 25 June in Pristina, under NATO occupation, but hardly protection, 15 people (Serbs) were killed in a single day.

The aftermath of NATO's war

The Independent reported British troops eating pizzas with KLA forces in a KLA torture chamber. No doubt this is how the victors celebrate. What kind of victory is it?

'Serbs out, NATO in, refugees in.'

British Defence Secretary

George Robertson

The stated objectives were 'humanitarian and peacekeeping'. 'Saving Kosovar Albanians'? Certainly not: 10,000 were 'entirely predictably' killed. 'Restoring peace to Kosovo'? Not K-For troops entered Kosovo on 12 June; within three days the KLA had killed or kidnapped 30 people. Within four days the Red Cross estimated 30,000 Serbs, Montenegrins and Gypsies had fled Kosovo, including the only Orthodox Church bishop in the province. The withdrawal of Yugoslav soldiers saw the exodus increase.

Local K-For commanders have the power to detain anyone for consecutive 48-hour periods. Immediately upon entering Kosovo US troops began seizing people as suspected war criminals. George Robertson issued his triumphalist sound bite, 'Serbs out, NATO in, refugees in', the exodus turned into a stampede.

British paratroopers, whose last assignment was in Belize (keeping it safe for the Conservative Party treasurer), played their customary role, one perfected on the Irish nationalist people. One day into Kosovo they shot a Serb civilian. The exercise was repeated with other victims on 29 June, 3 July, and so on, always to the accompaniment of excuses and apologies from their commanders, with the obligatory appeal from K-For head, General Sir Michael Jackson, for Serbs to stay in Kosovo. Approximately 150,000 have left, out of an original population of 200,000. In other words, NATO has presided over precisely the ethnic cleansing it claimed to oppose, just as it did in Bosnia in 1996. NATO and British troops do not bring peace — they bring violence and repression.

The 'Peace Deal'
Yugoslav President Milosevic, European Union envoy Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari and the Russian envoy and former Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin agreed a deal on 3 June. It gave the UN Security Council control over the operation in Kosovo. From Yugoslavia's point of view this means that the UN mandate can, theoretically, be revoked by Russia and China.

There is to be no referendum on independence in Kosovo after three years, which the March 1999 Rambouillet Accord (Diktat is a better name) proposed. Kosovo is to remain, formally, part of Yugoslavia and Serbia.

NATO is to be confined to Kosovo, unlike the Rambouillet Diktat that envisaged its right to operate without hindrance across all Yugoslavia. The KLA is to be 'demilitarised' within 90 days; again unlike the Rambouillet Diktat which envisaged its permanent presence as an armed force.

Significantly, Russian troops are part of the K-For deployment. This

was undoubtedly contrary to the original intentions of the USA and Britain, who before and during the air war tried to belittle Russia and minimise its involvement.

Objectives partially achieved, contradictions intensifying

'War is the continuation of politics by other means,' said Clausewitz, a principle underlined by Lenin. FRI's analysis of the war began by examining the politics and relations of the contenders. The restraints put on capitalism by the existence of the Soviet Union and socialist bloc were removed with the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. There followed not just a scramble for resources, markets and profits by the major capitalist

trol and disagreements. French President Chirac 'personally approved targeting decisions' and vetoed plans to hit Belgrade targets earlier. Britain's military leadership and the Labour government expressed frustration at restraint on targeting and the pace of the assault.

Nevertheless, NATU held together and Kosovo is now a *de facto* colonial protectorate, divided into US, German, French, Italian and British zones. German capitalism was less intent on excluding Russia than the USA and Britain. German diplomacy with Russia helped secure the deal. German capitalism views Russia as useful in helping it resist complete US domination of eastern and south eastern Europe, the better to achieve Germany's own ambitions.



Belgrade: the aftermath of NATO bombing

powers, but also a change in relations between these powers. US global leadership was in question as Germany and Japan felt more free to assert their own imperial interests. The role of British imperialism had to be defined and demonstrated in changing global circumstances, particularly in relation to the USA and Germany. British capitalism had to assert a role in Europe that would serve the defence of its overseas assets (second only to those of the USA) and the status of the City of London as a leading world financial centre.

War is also an attempt to resolve contradictions or conflicts by violent means. To what extent has it done this? The war expressed different, not always complementary interests. The USA sought to enforce military and political hegemony in Europe and the world. Russia was to be isolated and subordinated. British imperialism wanted to elevate its status in Europe and Germany to expand its influence. China was given a warning and imperialism demonstrated the fate awaiting any who defy it.

Contradictions between the different powers and class forces have not been resolved but are intensifying, bringing with them the threat of wars to come.

Russia and China were unable to prevent NATO aggression. NATO acted beyond the control of the UN Security Council and so a check on US power was swept aside. This is a threat to Russia and China and countries that look to them for protection.

In NATO's first joint military operation out of its territory, conduct of the war was subject to political con-

Russia manoeuvres

Russia showed it would not be ejected from the world stage at the will of the USA and Britain. It retained the means to act in those areas where it has geo-strategic influence to protect.

At the onset of the war Prime Minister Primakov turned his plane back to Russia in mid-Atlantic on the way to the USA. At the close of the air war Russian troops raced to Pristina airport to be the first of K-For into Kosovo; two acts demonstrating Russian antagonism towards NATO expansionism.

Russia's military refuses to serve under NATO command. During a dispute over the deployment of Russian troops, NATO told Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine not to allow Russian forces to over-fly their territories. Russian pressure forced the Ukraine to reject the request.

The USA and NATO have established a new forward base in Kosovo to join their positions in Bosnia and Macedonia. This threatens eastern Europe and Russia's south western flank round to the Caucasus and the Caspian Basin energy reserves.

Russia has said it will redeploy nuclear weapons to its western borders and recently launched nuclear military manoeuvres off the coast of Iceland in a show of force to NATO. In July Russian and Iranian ministers met to denounce foreign interference in the Caspian region. A Russian MiG-29 fighter group has been deployed in Armenia as a counter to NATO influence in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova.

China's response

China intended to use its UN veto against the deal, but abstained on

grounds of Yugoslavia's acceptance. China has not accepted US apologies for bombing its embassy, has not signed the World Trade Organisation agreement on membership and has suggested that in the face of a declining trade surplus it may devalue its currency. This could trigger another Asian financial meltdown.

On 6 June China condemned a USA-Japan 'security pact' as 'a serious threat to China and the Asia-Pacific region'. Shortly afterwards South Korea's navy sank a North Korean boat. In July Taiwan rejected the 'One China' policy. China then announced it had neutron bomb-making capacity: these are bombs intended to threaten Taiwan. Next, China announced 'wartime mobilisation drills' in the seas that divide China from Taiwan. Britain and France began shipment of nuclear waste to Japan; material that can be used in nuclear weapons.

General Blair

Following up the British government's bellicosity during the war, Britain now provides the biggest NATO contingent in K-For. Intended to be 13,000, it is being reduced as military high command complains that British forces are over-stretched. Regardless, on 25 June, Blair announced that British troops and police were on standby as a UN rapid reaction 'peace-keeping' force. The double-breasted general is getting carried away with his 'new doctrine of international community'.

Eager to get the USA's share of new defence contracts for British firms, the Labour government has proposed European Union 'convergence criteria' for defence spending. This means bigger EU arms budgets.

In the ruins

NATO's advance will provoke greater instability in the Balkans. Montenegro's political leadership is encouraged by the USA to break from Serbia and hence Yugoslavia. Despite the 'peace' agreement, the KLA remain armed and intent on creating a greater Albania with serious consequences for Macedonia and its large Albanian population and for Greece likewise. Demonstrations are mounted against Milosevic in Serbia, but there is no indication that they are anti-imperialist.

The immediate cost of rebuilding Kosovo is put at £3 billion. The European Union has scheduled £320 million. Britain has contributed \$800,000 to the UN High Commission on Refugees for Kosovo, less than the cost of one Cruise missile. However, some 250 British firms have picked up Kosovo-linked information, but few have announced any intention of investing there. The notable exceptions being Securicor and Group 4 which want to run Pristina's prison.

Britain and the USA are intent on fishing in troubled waters and insist that Serbia receive no reconstruction aid until Milosevic is removed. Such an approach is calculated to stir up conflict in Serbia and allow imperialism to remove any remaining obstacles posed by the Yugoslav state to its rule.

'Accumulation of wealth at one pole is...at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital'

(Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1)¹

'The challenge of globalisation in the new century is not to stop the expansion of global markets. The challenge is to find the rules and institutions for stronger governance - local, national and global - to preserve the advantages of global markets and competition, but also to provide enough space for human, community and environmental resources to ensure that globalisation works for people - not just for profits.'

(*Human Development Report*, 1999)²

The frenetic international expansion of capital to every part of the world, the rising open of national borders to trade, capital and information flows and the increasing penetration of the market into all aspects of human life has had devastating consequences for the vast majority of humanity. Unprecedented wealth at one pole has indeed accompanied untold misery and toil at the other.

Over the last 10 years the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has charted year by year the impact of neo-liberalism and globalisation on human development. In their *Human Development Reports* they have presented a picture of capitalism's global expansion which has shown increasing concentration of income, resources and wealth among people, corporations and countries, accompanying growing marginalisation, growing human insecurity and growing inequality in both rich and poor countries. Such 'pernicious trends' they believe can be reversed with 'political will and commitment in the global community' and the benefits of competitive markets can be preserved with globalisation offering great opportunities for human advance.³ But, as DAVID YAFFE argues below, these 'pernicious trends' are the inevitable consequence of the capitalist system of production whose driving force is the production of ever greater profits. People's 'needs' will only be satisfied, if at all, and limited human advance can only occur, as a by-product of this profit-producing process.



Globalisation

A world of obscene and growing inequality

World gross domestic product (GDP) increased ninefold over the last 50 years to reach \$30,000bn and average per capita incomes more than tripled, yet more than 80 countries still have per capita incomes lower than they were 10 years or more ago. From 1980 to 1996, only 33 underdeveloped⁴ countries achieved 3% annual growth of GNP per capita, the rate needed to lay the foundation for reducing poverty, while in 59 countries, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union, GNP per capita declined. It is of little surprise that the income gap between the fifth of the world's people living in the richest countries and the fifth in the poorest has grown from 30 to 1 in 1960, to 60 to 1 in 1990 and 74 to 1 in 1997.⁵

Towards the end of the 1990s the fifth of the world's people living in the highest income countries had or consumed:

- 86% of the world's GDP - the bottom fifth just 1%.
- 82% of the world's export markets - the bottom fifth just 1%.
- 68% of foreign direct investment - the bottom fifth just 1%.
- 74% of the world's telephone lines - the bottom fifth 1.5%.
- 93.3% of internet users - the bottom fifth 0.2%.
- 84% of the world's paper - the bottom fifth 1.1%.
- 87% of the world's vehicles - the bottom fifth less than 1%.
- 58% of total energy - the bottom fifth 4%.

That the world's dominant consumers are overwhelmingly concentrated among the highest income countries is dramatically highlighted by the fact that one child born in the rich capitalist nations consumes more resources than 30-50 children born in underdeveloped countries.

The underdeveloped countries with some 80% of the world's population have less than 20% of the world's GDP. More than a quarter of the 4.5bn people living in underdeveloped countries do not have some of life's most basic needs.

- 1.3bn people live on incomes of less than \$1 a day, almost 3bn on less than \$2 a day.
- 1.3bn people do not have access to clean water.
- 2.5bn people lack basic sanitation
- 2bn people lack access to electricity.
- More than 850m people are illiterate.

At least 33m people in the world were living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 1998, with 95% of all HIV-infected people living in underdeveloped countries. AIDS causes 2.5m deaths a year. As a result nine countries in Africa are expected to see a loss of 17 years in life expectancy - down to 47 years, the level of the 1960s.

Inevitably, there are large income inequalities within the underdeveloped countries. In 29 of the 68 countries with data, the ratio of the incomes of the richest 20% to those of the poorest 20% exceed 10:1, in 17 countries 15:1 and in 9 countries 20:1. In Latin America and the Caribbean the gaps are huge with the richest 20% having an average income of more than \$17,000 and the poorest 20%, \$930. The overthrow of socialism in the ex-Soviet bloc led to the fastest changes in income inequality ever recorded. Of these countries, Russia has the greatest inequality with the richest 20% having

11 times the income of the poorest 20%.

Inequality is growing also within the rich imperialist countries themselves. Inequality has risen in 18 of the 19 countries in the rich countries' organisation the OECD. Inequality grew most in Sweden, the UK and the USA. According to the HDR 1999, the number of families below the poverty line in the UK rose by 60% in the 1980s, and in the Netherlands by 40%. In fact, using the more familiar definitions of poverty - people living in households with income below one-half the average - the number of people in poverty in the UK increased 182%, or nearly threefold, between 1979 and 1995/1997 from 5m to 14.1m or 24% of the population. More than a third of children (4.6m) in the UK live in households below this poverty level.⁶

This growth in inequality throughout the world has its counterpart in the obscene concentration of wealth among the ultra-rich. In the four years between 1994 and 1998, the net wealth of the 200 richest people in the world, including 50 from underdeveloped countries, 16 from the Arab states and 3 from the ex-Soviet bloc, increased from \$440bn to \$1,042bn, more than the combined income of 41% of the world's people (2.3bn). The assets of the richest three people were more than the combined GNP of the 48 least developed countries with more than 540m people.⁷

These developments are not accidental but are the necessary outcome of a crisis-ridden capitalist system.

The reality of globalisation

Globalisation is only the latest manifestation of the structural crisis of capitalism that has been continuous in one form or another since the mid-1970s. The stagnation in the capital accumulation process, with the rate of world economic growth falling over the last three decades, and the re-emergence of rivalries between the rich capitalist nations at the end of the 1970s, were the result of an overaccumulation of capital in the heartlands of capitalism and imperialism. There were insufficient profits to both secure the normal profitable expansion of productive capital and finance a growing state sector together with a rapidly expanding unproductive private service sector. The rate of profit on capital was falling. Globalisation has been capital's response. Its key features are:

- The huge increase in the export of capital.
- The growing monopolisation of capital through mergers, acquisitions and privatisations.
- The unprecedented autonomy of the financial system from real production.
- Cuts in state welfare
- A dramatic rise in the exploitation of labour and intensity of work.
- Mass unemployment and rapidly growing inequality

The imperative is, by any means necessary, to increase the profitability of capital. Far from being a beacon of economic progress, the frenetic international expansion of capital to every part of the world is a sign of economic crisis and instability in a world of growing and obscene inequality.⁸

Economic domination by rich imperialist countries

Unlike the UNDP, its sister organisation the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD),

which publishes the *World Investment Report*, has few scruples in promoting globalisation. It sees foreign direct investment (FDI) by multinational companies as 'building an integrated production system - the core of the globalising world economy'. And it believes the ultimate objective of FDI liberalisation - removing barriers to entry of FDI - 'is to enhance economic growth and welfare in countries'.⁹ However, this is far from being the case. UNCTAD reports contain a wealth of statistical material which show how multinational companies, in seeking out the most profitable outlets for FDI, reinforce the economic domination of the vast majority of the world by a small number of rich imperialist countries.

While world export of goods and services increased almost three times between the 1970s and 1997, FDI grew seven times over the same period. This is a characteristic feature of imperialism.¹⁰ FDI links national economies and multinational companies have become the principle vehicle in this process.

In 1997 export of capital in the form of FDI reached a new record level of \$424bn.¹¹ 85% of these exports came from multinational companies in the rich imperialist countries with only five of these countries responsible for nearly 72% of this (60% of world total) - US (\$114.5bn), UK (\$58bn), Germany (\$34bn), Japan (\$26bn) and France (\$24.5bn). The same five countries have been predominant for nearly three decades, only changing their relative positions. The accumulated stock of FDI in 1997, attributed to some 53,000 multinational companies and 450,000 foreign affiliates, was \$3,500bn, with more than 90% of these belonging to multinational companies from the rich imperialist countries. 69% of that (62% of the world total) came from the same five dominant countries.

And multinational companies

There is a concentration of FDI among a small number of multinational companies from the dominant imperialist countries. The top 100 multinationals alone had foreign assets of \$1,800bn and foreign sales of \$2,149bn - more than 14% of the total assets of foreign affiliates of multinational companies and nearly 23% of their foreign sales. Their total foreign employment in 1996 amounted to barely 0.26% of the world's workforce. Their overall global employment actually fell 3.3% between 1995 and 1996, so they are hardly job promoters. The same five rich imperialist countries provided the headquarters of 75% of these companies, with only two companies coming from underdeveloped countries. Multinational companies in the top 100 alone are responsible for half of the FDI stock. In six of the nine other imperialist countries for which there is data, 25 multinationals account for more than half of their respective countries' outward FDI stock. 57% of the outward stock in the case of the UK. The share of world exports by foreign affiliates of multinational companies increased from a quarter in the late 1980s to a third in 1995. Two-thirds of all international transactions are associated with the international production of multinational corporations. The 350 largest corporations account for 40% of global trade.

The frantic drive to increase the mass of profits sufficiently to compete

Colonisation = poverty



Villagers in India protest at a power project, financed by US multinational Enron

sates for a fall in the rate of profit not only leads to the centralisation of capital in the hands of ever fewer and larger multinational corporations, but also determines the extent and direction of foreign direct investment. The forces of monopoly consolidate at a global level. The majority of FDI going into the imperialist nations increasingly takes the form of mergers and acquisitions, as opposed to new or 'greenfield' investment. A smaller number of huge corporations dominate the global market, limiting competition and reducing employment as capital is restructured and rationalised globally to reduce costs and increase profitability.

In 1997 total majority-owned cross-border mergers and acquisitions (M&A) reached a record level of \$238bn (out of total cross-border M&A of \$342bn) and accounted for nearly 60% of global FDI, up from 50% in 1996. Corporations from the imperialist countries accounted for 90% of these. Cross border M&As in 1997 were nearly a quarter of all M&As worldwide. Preliminary figures for 1998 suggest this process is accelerating. Worldwide FDI rose 5% last year to an estimated \$644bn, fuelled by a surge in cross-border M&As by imperi-

alist corporations. The value of majority-owned M&As at \$411bn was almost double that for 1997 and triple the 1995 amount. New 'greenfield' investment accounted for only a fifth of last year's FDI. It is this take-over mania that is fuelling stockmarkets and creating the obscene incomes of the new rich, as the value of their salaries and share options reach stratospheric levels.

...and super-exploitation of underdeveloped countries

The amount of FDI invested in underdeveloped countries has grown significantly over the last five years. \$149bn, 37% of FDI, went to these countries. This is more than double the level of inflows into underdeveloped countries from 1986 to 1991 and nearly 25% above that of the high levels recorded in the early 1980s. In 1997 the underdeveloped countries' share of global FDI stock was more than 30% – showing the long-term importance of these countries for enhancing the profits of imperialist corporations.

This investment is, however, very concentrated. Multinational corporations require not only a high rate of return on their investments but also the ability to generate an adequate mass of profits through the access their investments provide to productive resources and essential markets globally. This means they concentrate on a small number of strategic countries and investments that serve their overall global profitability. In 1997, nearly 90% of investments in underdeveloped countries went to only 15 countries, with one country alone, China, receiving 30%. On the other hand, for 100 underdeveloped countries FDI has averaged less than \$100m a year since 1990 and nine countries have experienced disinvestment or net outflows.

South, southeast and east Asia received 55%, and Latin America and the Caribbean 38% of the total FDI into underdeveloped countries. However, FDI into Africa (excluding South Africa) was \$4.7bn in 1997, a mere 3% share of the total going into underdeveloped countries. It is comparable to the share going to a single Asian country such as Indonesia. Nearly two-thirds of investment in Africa went to just five countries – Nigeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Angola. Nigeria received more than a third of FDI going to sub-Saharan Africa. Not surprisingly, the share of oil-exporting African economies in Africa's total

inflows was very high, about 73% in the period 1991 to 1996. Such investment is not concerned with enhancing the 'economic growth and welfare' of these countries but with the global profitability of the imperialist corporations.

So it is not surprising that the rate of return on investments in Africa by US multinationals has averaged 28% since 1990. It has been more than double that in any other region, including the rich capitalist countries as a group (11.7% in 1993), in many of those years. In 1997 it fell a little to 25.3%, still more than double the average for all countries, and much higher than the return in Asia (16.2%), Latin America (12.5%) and in underdeveloped countries as a whole (14.0%). Income from UK investment in Africa increased by 60% between 1989 and 1995. Japanese foreign affiliates had a higher return from Africa than any other region except for Latin America and the Caribbean and West Asia. FDI in Africa is low precisely because of its low level of economic development, and it is limited to those sectors with important natural resources and high profitability.

The overaccumulation of capital in the rich imperialist nations has led to a massive increase of flows of short-term capital in the form of portfolio investment, seeking high returns with little or no long-term commitment to the area of investment. These now total more than \$2,000bn, almost three times the level of the 1980s. As a result there has been a large increase in portfolio investment in emerging market economies (underdeveloped countries that have sizeable markets opened up in free-ranging international capital flows). The flows have increased from \$796m in 1986 to \$34.6bn in 1995. This is reflected in the growing importance of stockmarkets in a small number of underdeveloped countries as a potential source of high returns for financial institutions from the rich imperialist countries. Stockmarket capitalisation of emerging markets expanded more than 10 times from \$17bn to \$1,900bn from 1986 to 1995, increasing their share of world stockmarket capitalisation from 4% to nearly 11% in the same period. The concentration of these flows of portfolio investment to underdeveloped countries is even greater than for FDI inflows. In the case of flows from the US, 33% of the total flows to emerging markets, 81% went to only 11 countries.

It is precisely the unequal relationship that the underdeveloped world has with the world economy, which transforms the labour of the underdeveloped world's people through trade, foreign direct investment and debt into capital and profits for the imperialist corporations.

Unpayable foreign debt

The recent demonstrations of Jubilee 2000 in the run up to the Cologne summit of the seven dominant imperialist powers (G7) and Russia in mid-June did much to highlight the devastating consequences of debt on the lives of the world's poorest people. However, the debt relief of some \$30bn offered by the summit to the world's poorest nations – most of which was not being paid back anyway – far from 'helping the world's poorest nations achieve sustained growth and independence' (Bill Clinton), will not fundamentally change anything. The debt relief will only become possible on acceptance of IMF structural adjustment programmes (for three years instead of the previous six). This means 'economic reform' to open up the economies of the poorest nations and subject them even more thoroughly to the trade and capital flows from the imperialist nations. In other words the economic order that caused the problems in the first place,

will not only remain in place but will be strengthened. The poor countries will continue to spend more on debt payments than on basic health and education and their debt will still increase.

In fact the global dominance by the imperialist powers, with the inevitable perpetuation of inequality, poverty and debt, is far more structurally embedded in the system and far less open to debt reduction as a solution than many have maintained. The facts speak for themselves.

The debt of the underdeveloped countries is now a staggering \$2,346bn. The overall debt has been growing despite massive debt repayment. From 1987 to 1997 the debt grew from \$1,451bn to \$2,346bn an increase of \$895bn despite debt service payments of \$2,198bn. 55% of this debt is owed to private capital and outside the remit of any official debt negotiations, involving governments and multilateral institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. It is only in the case of the poorest countries that the largest proportion of their debt comes from 'official' sources.

Sub-Saharan Africa owes \$189bn and nearly 70% of this is from 'official' sources because private capital has barely invested in the area in the recent decade. Writing off most of this debt will hardly change anything, precisely because of sub-Saharan Africa's dependent relation to the world economic system. Its exports, for example, amount to nearly 30% of GDP, far higher than the 19% of GDP average of the rich imperialist countries in the OECD. And many of the prices of what it exports, primary commodities, have fallen as prices of its imports have risen. Primary commodity prices in the 1990s were 45% lower than those in the 1980s and 10% lower than the lowest level during the Great Depression in 1932. The terms of trade of poorest underdeveloped countries have declined a cumulative 50% in the past 25 years. Sub-Saharan Africa will never be able to produce enough or export enough to stop its debt growing and feed, clothe, give basic health care and education to its people.

It is precisely the unequal relationship that the underdeveloped world has with the world economy, which transforms the labour of the underdeveloped world's people through trade, foreign direct investment and debt into capital and profits for the imperialist corporations.

...and financial capital

International bank lending, dominated by the financial corporations from imperialist countries, grew from \$265bn in 1975 to \$4,200bn in 1994. The world's top ten investment banks control 77% of the market. \$1,500bn a day flows through the foreign exchange system as financial institutions and multinational corporations hedge, gamble and speculate on the movement of national currencies. The financial system has now an unprecedented autonomy from real production and represents an ever-present threat to the economic stability of even the most developed capitalist countries.

The so-called miracle Asian 'Tiger' economies could not escape the devastating impact of financial capital in its relentless drive to sustain profitability when, in 1997, their economies hit deep structural problems. International capital simply withdrew from the area. These countries spent some \$100bn defending their currencies to

no avail and around \$86bn was withdrawn by financial capital from the area in less than a year. As the crisis spread to other emerging economies, overall flows to these economies from international banks fell from \$130.4bn in 1996 to \$36.9bn in 1997, with flows being reversed in 1998 and \$29.1bn withdrawn from these markets. The turnaround in the current account of Korea which resulted was equivalent to 18% of Korea's GDP and for Thailand, it was even greater, at 20% of GDP. 75% of the swing between 1996 and 1998 was by commercial banks alone withdrawing funds from the five most affected Asian economies. These countries, as a result, experienced recessions of a size not seen since the Great Depression. The social consequences have been devastating with the number of people in absolute poverty, on less than \$1 a day, expected to double from 30m before the crisis to 60m by the year 2000. Having bankrupted thousand of businesses and banks, like vultures, the imperialist banks and financial institutions are now returning to east Asia and other emerging markets to reap their rewards. Capital is concerned with profitability not human development.

Globalisation can never work for all peoples under capitalism. As long as capitalism survives and determines economic relations between nations and peoples, capitalism's global expansion will indeed concentrate income, resources and wealth among a small number of people, corporations and countries. Accumulation of wealth at one pole will always have as a precondition accumulation of misery and toil for the vast majority of humanity at the other.

1 X Marx and F Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 35 Lawrence and Wishart London 1998 p640.

2 *Human Development Report 1999* (HDR 1999), New York Oxford OUP 1999 p2. (Available at <http://www.undp.org/hdro/report.html>).

3 Ibid, 'Overview Globalisation with a human face' pp1-15.

4 I say 'underdeveloped' rather than 'developing' used in all the reports because it more clearly reflects the limited development imposed on these countries through their relation to the dominant imperialist powers.

5 See my article 'Poverty and Inequality in Blair's Britain', *FRFI* 147 February/March 1999. HDR 1999 uses a narrower definition of poverty, that below half the median income, which is significantly lower than the average. The figure for the 1980s increase in poverty on the broader definition is 2.4 times or 140%.

6 Most statistics in this section are taken from HDR 1999 or earlier reports.

7 For an explanation of the crisis of capitalism and the falling rate of profit see D Yaffe and P Bullock, 'Inflation, the crisis and the post-war boom' in *Revolutionary Communist* 3/4, Larkin Publications 1975, reprinted 1979 £3.50 inc p&p. For a discussion of globalisation see my 'Globalisation a revision of the world by imperialism' *FRFI* 131 June/July 1996 and 'The politics and economics of globalisation' *FRFI* 137 June/July 1997, both available on our website www.rcafri.easynet.co.uk.

8 *World Investment Report 1997*, United Nations, New York and Geneva 1997, pxxv. Most of the material in the following sections is taken from the *World Investment Report 1998*.

9 See Lenin, 'Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism', CW Vol 22, Moscow 1964, p185-304 and p266, for a list of the dominant characteristics of imperialism, much of which could apply to globalisation.

10 Inflows were just over \$400bn and differ from outflows as a result of data collection problems. Both inflows and outflows are underestimated as they do not cover investment financed by funds raised in domestic or international markets. If these are included some \$1,600bn would have been added to the capital base of international production.



Armed guard outside a bank in Mexico

60 years ago, on 23 August 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed a Non-Aggression Pact (NAP). The NAP came as a shock to many socialists primarily because the Soviet Union was seen as the only consistent anti-fascist and anti-Nazi state. ANTHONY BIDGOOD describes the background to the Pact in order to understand why the Soviet Union signed it.

The rise of the fascist threat

Since its successful revolution, imperialist enemies intent on its destruction had encircled the Soviet Union. The Nazi seizure of power in Germany in 1933 and the crushing of the mass support enjoyed by the German communists led to an especially virulent anti-communist and anti-Semitic state. Nazi Germany was the most pronounced example of the rise of the fascist and racist right in Europe during the 1930s. To fight this threat, the Soviet Union sought to form alliances with the western imperialist powers. By May 1934 the Soviet Union and France had concluded a treaty designed to counter a resurgent Germany, and in September 1934 the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations. The Communist International (Comintern) instructed its member parties to attempt to form 'Popular Fronts' with not only Labour and Social Democratic parties but also with non-fascist bourgeois parties. These efforts met with partial success with 'Popular Fronts' forming governments in France and Spain in 1936 and in Chile in 1938.

But by the middle of 1939 these twin efforts, of Soviet diplomatic initiatives and 'Popular Front' governments, had essentially failed. In France the 'Popular Front' government had become just another right-wing government whilst in Spain military-fascist rebels had defeated the Republican government. Meanwhile the British government pursued a policy of appeasement towards Nazi Germany, leading in September 1938 to the Munich Agreement. Britain and France forced Czechoslovakia, by then the only democracy in eastern Europe, to acquiesce in Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland - Czech border areas inhabited by German speakers. The Soviet Union, which had signed a mutual assistance pact with Czechoslovakia, was excluded from the conference that agreed the carve-up. On 15 March 1939 Nazi Germany occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia and created a puppet Slovak state.

The Soviet Union also faced threats in the Far East. In September 1931, Japanese imperialism annexed Manchuria, the most industrialised and natural resource-rich province in China, and in July 1937 embarked on a ruthless war to subjugate the whole of China. It threatened the People's Republic of Mongolia, clashing with the Soviet Red Army during 1937, the summer of 1938, and yet again in May 1939. Although the Japanese withdrew, they were still a real threat, and it was this that necessitated 'either an early accommodation with Hitler or a military alliance with the democracies'.

The purges

The Soviet Union also had huge internal problems - 1937-38 were the years of the *Ezhovshchina* or purges. 681,892 people were executed by order of *troikas* - three person special tribunals - and millions more imprisoned and exiled.² Although the Communist Party claimed that such repression was necessary to

combat imperialist-inspired sabotage, the numbers alleged to be involved seem incredible twenty years after the October Revolution. They appear to contradict Stalin's claim in January 1934, that: 'there is nothing more to prove and it seems no one left to fight... It must be admitted that the Party today is united as it never has been before'. In the Red Army, thousands of officers were dismissed; many imprisoned or executed, including three of the Red Army's five marshals. Whatever the perceived threats from imperialist conspiracies, the *Ezhovshchina* undoubtedly weakened the Soviet administration, Communist Party and Red Army at the very time when Nazi Germany and Japan were becoming stronger and more aggressive.

Bolshevik support for the right of Poland to become a state had been 'rewarded' in 1920 by a Polish invasion of the Ukraine. With French assistance, Poland forcibly incorporated several million Ukrainians and Belarusians into an enlarged Polish state. These new 'citizens', besides being grossly exploited by Polish landlords and capitalists, were discriminated against because of their nationality and religion. Anti-Semitism was so pronounced in the Polish state that by the beginning of 1939 more Jews had emigrated from Poland (400,000), than from Nazi Germany.

The Soviet Union still attempted to reach an agreement with the western imperialists and offered to aid Poland if it were attacked. Poland

(the British Empire). This nonsense in fact supports Nazi expansionism. If the NAP had not been signed then the Nazis would have seized the whole of Poland and not a part of it. That was the alternative in September 1939. Was all of Poland to be under Nazi rule or part of it?

A further question arises. Did the Soviet Union regard its arrangements with Nazi Germany as permanent? Certain actions indicate that this may have been the case. Immediately following the NAP, anti-Nazi films such as *Dr Mabuse* and *The Family Oppenheim* disappeared from Soviet cinemas. The word fascist disappeared from the Soviet press. The Friendship and Border Treaty implies permanence and on 31 October 1939 Molotov, the Soviet Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, declared to the Supreme Soviet: 'We have always held the view that a strong Germany is a necessary precondition for a lasting peace in Europe'. Throughout 1940 and the first half of 1941 the Soviet Union delivered large quantities of raw materials to Nazi Germany.

Of more concern was the expulsion of German communists from the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany. Like other foreign communists in the Soviet Union, German communists had been subject to repressive measures during the *Ezhovshchina*. During the period of the NAP many of these imprisoned German communists were expelled from the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany as 'unwanted foreigners' and put into concentration camps. These expulsions were inexcusable and could only have taken place because of the NAP.

Most communists accepted the NAP because they saw the defence of the Soviet Union as basic internationalism; it was also set down as condition 15 of the 'Twenty One' conditions to be met for Comintern membership. As Otto Kuusinen, the Finnish communist and Comintern leader, asked Ruth Fischer in 1926: 'Do you recognise that there is no antagonism whatever between the policy of the USSR, the state of the proletarian dictatorship, and the interests of the international revolution?'⁴

While almost all communists accepted Kuusinen's proposition, they still wished to continue their parties' anti-fascist policy. Problems arose when the Comintern, with the active intervention and support of Stalin, argued that the war which finally broke out in September 1939 was an imperialist one, and that both sides were equally culpable and communist energies should be directed against their own governments.

Should the Comintern have imposed such a position on communist parties throughout the world? A reading of *About Turn*⁵ shows that the British CP changed its anti-fascist position only under international pressure. The French CP saw 21 of its deputies (parliamentarians) out of 72 and five members of its central committee resign over the change from anti-fascism.⁶ The German communist

leadership in Paris continued with its anti-Nazi politics until 'corrected' by its Moscow leadership.⁷

While it was necessary, for the reasons outlined, for the Soviet Union to reach an agreement with Nazi Germany, was it necessary for communists world-wide to change their public attitudes towards fascism and Nazism? In an imperialist state like Britain such a change did take place, and correctly much more emphasis was placed on fighting British imperialism. However the 'nature' of Nazism had not changed because it had reached an agreement with the Soviet Union. Was it not possible to oppose both British imperialism and Nazi Germany while supporting the Soviet Union? Obviously the answer was yes. Communists' commitment to anti-fascism can be illustrated by the number of volunteers, approximately 35,000 - a large majority of whom were communists - who went to fight the Francoists in Spain. The problem lay in the way that unconditional defence of the Soviet Union was implemented. For instance, after June 1941, the Indian CP abandoned leadership of the struggle against British imperialism to bourgeois nationalists because Britain was now an ally of the Soviet Union. The political position of the Indian CP stands in stark contrast to that of the Chinese CP and its independent line that enabled it to achieve victory not only over Japanese imperialism but also over Chiang Kai-shek's bourgeois nationalists.

The NAP is now of historical interest. However the ideological offensive against Marx, under the guise of an attack on 'Stalinism' - a term now devoid of content and hence meaning, continues because the imminent problems facing the globe can only be solved by the destruction of capitalism and its odious outgrowth imperialism.

Attempts to understand the positive and negative aspects of 'the combined and uneven development' of Soviet society are still necessary in a world dominated by imperialism - the better to struggle against imperialism.

1. Anthony Read and David Fisher, *The Deadly Embrace: Hitler, Stalin and the Nazi-Soviet Pact 1939-1941* (London 1988), p87. By the end of August 1939 the Red Army had decisively beaten the Japanese forces whose losses included 25,000 dead. An interesting account of this conflict is in Julius Madar, *Die Sorge Report* (Berlin 1984), pp256-262.

2. Robert Manning, 'The Soviet economic crisis of 1936-1940 and the Great Purges' in J. Arch Getty and Robert Manning (eds), *Stalinist Terror: New perspectives* (Cambridge 1993), pp116-141.

3. P.M.H Bell, *John Bull & the Bear: British public opinion, foreign policy and the Soviet Union 1941-1945* (London 1990), p81.

4. Ruth Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism: A Study in the Origins of the State Party* (London 1982), p572.

5. Monty Johnstone 'Introduction' to Francis King and George Matthews, *About Turn: The British Communist Party and the Second World War. The Verbatim Record of the Central Committee Meetings of 25 September and 2-3 October 1939* (London 1990), pp20-21.

6. See footnote 5 for details.

7. *About Turn*, p44 note 2.

Hitler/Stalin Pact Necessity and compromise



'Hitler in the footsteps of Napoleon', Soviet cartoon on the inevitability of war

Furthermore, the need to defend itself against threats from Germany and Japan had adverse effects on the Soviet economy between 1936 and 1940. Defence expenditure grew from 3.4% of the total budget in 1932 to 18.1% in 1938 and 32.5% in 1940, reducing investment available for all other areas of the economy. Hence, by mid-1939, the Soviet Union was fighting Japanese imperialism in the Far East, threatened by Nazi expansionism in Europe, and excluded by the western imperialists.

Poland

Following the destruction of Czechoslovakia, Hitler demanded Poland join the Anti-Comintern Pact and discuss the status of Danzig, a city of German speakers theoretically under the control of the League of Nations but in reality ruled by the local Nazis. For Nazi Germany the 'separation' of Danzig from the rest of Germany was a 'problem', and it was obvious that the Nazis would resolve their 'problem' by force of arms. German offers to 'negotiate' with Poland took place long before the Soviet Union began negotiations with Hitler's Germany. It is important to remember what the Polish state had become by 1939

rebuffed all Soviet offers, as did Britain and France, although the British people strongly favoured an alliance with the Soviet Union and France. For instance in April and June 1939 two Gallup polls asked: 'Are you in favour of a military alliance between Great Britain, France and Russia?' In April the responses were Yes 87%, No 7%, No opinion 6%, and in June the responses were 84%, 9% and 7% respectively.³ Whatever revolutionaries think of such polls and the tactics that were possible based on such sentiments, there can be little doubt that the British public did not want to appease the Nazis any more.

The Pact and its consequences

Such was the context for the Soviet Union's agreement with Nazi Germany. By September 1939, it had little choice. Both the NAP and a Friendship and Border Treaty (FBT) concluded on 28 September 1939, contained secret clauses involving the division of Poland and other territorial changes in eastern Europe. It is these territorial rearrangements that the Left uses to attack the Soviet Union and to equate it with Nazi Germany (but never of course with

John Maclean: The class war on an International Scale



A month earlier, the sailors at Kiel in Germany had mutinied, leading to a general strike and the formation of Councils of Workers' Soldiers and Sailors Deputies. Karl Liebknecht was released from gaol to proclaim the Republic as the Kaiser fled. Another crowned head had fallen! The revolution against war and the war profit system which had spawned it was spreading.

The ruling classes of Europe were united in their terror of Bolshevism. Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson described the Cabinet meeting of 10 November:

'Lloyd George read two wires from Tiger describing Foch's interview with the Boches, and Tiger is afraid Germany will break up and Bolshevism become rampant. Lloyd George asked me if I wanted this, or would rather have an armistice. I unhesitatingly said "armistice". All the Cabinet agreed. Our real danger now is not the Boches but Bolsheviks.'

An armistice was declared the following day and the First World War ended on 11 November 1918. Maclean did not disagree with the ruling classes' fears.

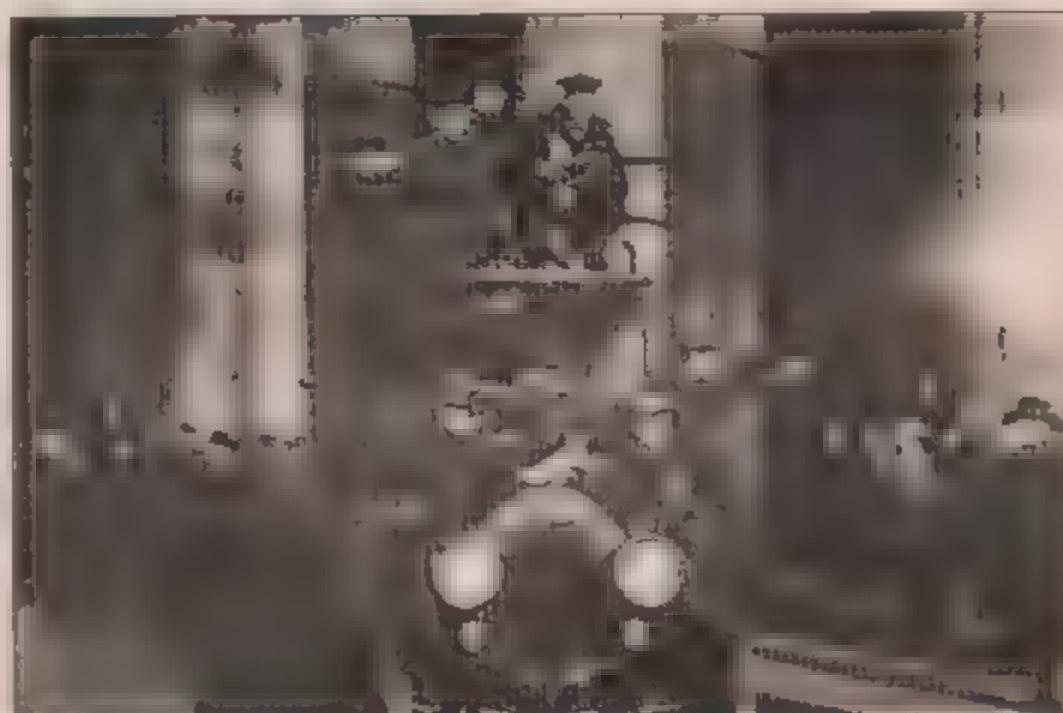
'We witness today what all marxists naturally had expected the capitalist class and their Governments joined together in a most vigorous & active attempt to crush Bolshevism in Russia and Spartacism in Germany. This is the class war on an international scale.'

Maclean made these remarks in January 1919, having recovered his strength after imprisonment and characteristically putting himself at the disposal of the movement. There was no doubt that that the months of torture in gaol had weakened Maclean physically but he was far from broken in spirit. He was unable to participate directly in the General Election campaign following his selection, while a prisoner in October 1918 as a Labour candidate for the Corby District of Glasgow. He had been selected as a member of the British Socialist Party, which was affiliated to the Labour Party. A new constitution, designed as a fortress against Bolshevism, would be adopted later that year by the Labour Party to deliberately exclude revolutionaries, like Maclean, who was only too willing to use any platform to advance socialism at this point. He was no dupe of the Labour Party as we shall show.

At an eve of poll rally, Maclean advocated a straight revolutionary programme and called for the release of those imprisoned at home and abroad for their political activities. Eugene Dabs and Bill Haywood in the United States and Sinn Fein members, Joe Robinson and Burney Freeland in Peterhead Prison in Scotland. Maclean received a very respectable 7,436 votes against 14,247 for John Barnes, apparently an independent but in practice Labour's preferred candidate. Not at all bad for a convicted traitor!

1918 Sinn Fein victory

Maclean, the revolutionary communist, had been defeated in a bourgeois election by an honest and well-tried representative of Labour' where the right to vote had only recently been extended to women over 30. Ireland and the revolutionary nationalists of Sinn Fein challenged the whole



The German Revolution of 1919

rotten system of British 'democracy' by peaceful, electoral methods, winning 73 out of 103 Irish seats. 70% of the Irish people had voted for an Independent Irish Republic. At the roll call of the First Dail Eireann in January 1919 the reply 'Fe ghlás ag Gallaibh' - imprisoned by the enemy followed 38 names.

The World War had been fought, it was claimed, to defend the rights of small nations but this small nation had proclaimed its independence through the ballot box, despite widespread arrests and the banning of Sinn Fein election meetings and leaflets. The majority of the new Sinn Fein MPs were in British gaols while Ireland was under British military rule again. The revolutionary struggle against British imperialism had a profound effect on Maclean. In May 1919 he shared the May Day platform in Glasgow with Constance Markievicz, before 150,000 workers. A comrade of Connolly's in advocating a workers' republic in Ireland, she had become the first ever woman MP but followed Sinn Fein in abstaining from taking her seat in the British Parliament, having just been released herself from Holloway gaol. Maclean visited Dublin for the first time in July and recorded his impressions. He witnessed the workers' boycott of the Allies' 'Peace Saturday' parade. The solemn larse of 15,000 soldiers with bayonets fixed, machine guns and tanks marching through the streets to celebrate peace.'

Maclean was typically blunt in his remarks at meetings, and was heckled when he attempted to lecture the Irish on their struggle. He honestly records the arguments and it was Maclean who was learning. His assertion 'that Irish labour would not be free under a Sinn Fein Republic, but only under a socialist workers' republic' provoked a hostile response, where the audience demanded to know why Scottish regiments who refused to serve in India to suppress rebellion there came to Ireland. Maclean reflected deeply

Released from prison on 3 December 1918, Maclean had requested a quiet return to his city. It was not to be. A huge crowd had gathered in George Square, Glasgow and he was lifted up onto a carriage where waving a massive red flag, he called for cheers for the German socialist revolution. That red emblem which now flew over the public buildings of Moscow and Petrograd was unfurled over the skies of Berlin.

Keeping capitalism busy at home

The period of 1918-1919 was one in which, at every level of anti-imperialist, industrial, political and revolutionary struggle the discredited ruling classes were forced to act. At time since 1848 the year of revolutions throughout Europe, of Chartism and of the Communist Manifesto. Walter Kenna, author of *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921* states:

'The evidence shows that the crisis which British Society faced between 1918 and 1920 was probably the most serious since the time of the Chartist.'

Lloyd George, in a secret memorandum to Clemenceau of France, expressed this fear:

'The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution. There is a deep sense, not only of discontent, but of anger and revolt amongst the workmen. The whole existing order, in its political, social and economic aspects is questioned by the masses of the population from one end of Europe to the other.'

From January 1919 Maclean was out to seize the time. He developed his assessment of what needed to be done in Britain. There were, he contended, still forces capable of challenging the resurgent capitalism. A report of a speech he made in November 1919 to commemorate the Russian Revolution and demand 'Hands off Russia' points to Maclean's widening identification of the actual challenge to the British ruling class. His stature as a socialist had not diminished despite the retreat of industrial struggle.

'On rising to speak he received a truly wonderful ovation and his speech was one scathing attack on British Imperialism throughout the world.'

Maclean was not ditching the battle over jobs, wages and conditions but the class struggle is more than this. He supported the campaign for a 24-hour strike but he argued that it should also adopt the slogan 'Hands off Ireland, Egypt and India'. Maclean was a revolutionary communist more than an industrial organiser more than a solidarity fighter, he was an anti-imperialist and a socialist. This was the political direction Maclean was to follow from now on.

Michael McGregor

Many Irishmen live in Scotland, and as they are Celts, like the Scots, and are out for Irish independence, and as wage-earners have been champion fighters for working-class rights, we expect them to ally themselves with us, and help us to attain our Scottish Communist Republic.

Where are you coming from, John O'Farrell, and where are you going, Nick Cohen?

- Things can only get better: 18 miserable years in the life of a Labour Party supporter 1979-1997 John O'Farrell, Doubleday 1998 £9.99
- Cruel Britannia: reports on the sinister and the preposterous Nick Cohen, Verso, 1999 £16

These two books are different in form. John O'Farrell's is an autobiography and Nick Cohen's is made up of reprints of published articles. Yet it is interesting to read them one after the other, because while O'Farrell describes the horrors of 18 years of Tory Rule, 13 of them under the hated Thatcher and his longing for a Labour Party victory, Nick Cohen takes up the story with his account of the New Labour government since May 1997.

O'Farrell is a professional comedy writer and if you enjoy the humour of *Spitting Image* and *Have I got news for you* you will laugh aloud at this book. It is also surprisingly informative for readers who rejected the Labour Party, with its Parliamentary Road to Socialism during the Tory years, but who engaged in anti-government politics. If we thought it was tough and the going was slow, that is nothing compared to the dismal experience of Labour Party ward and local council politics. We were involved in a variety of direct action-type initiatives: the Non-Stop Picket against apartheid (which he visited), massive demonstrations in the anti-deportation campaigns including a march from Manchester to London by the Viraj Mendes Defence Campaign, arrests for supporting the right of the Irish people to self-determination on the streets and the anti-Poll Tax campaign which culminated with 300,000 people fighting pitched battles with the police in Trafalgar Square. John O'Farrell was not there because he was helping with a Labour Party street stall outside Sainsbury's.

How dim and restricted, then, the political life of O'Farrell. Dim in his politics and restricted in his activity. But the book is saved by a gently mocking awareness that the Labour Party and the council estate middle-

class students and political correctness all sit uncomfortably side by side. Thatcher's media thundered home the message of Sun newspaper bigotry and topless models while corrupt ministers proclaimed a return to Victorian values. Meanwhile the better-off working class just kept on voting Tory.

His account takes us back over the four Conservative governments and the desperate efforts of the Labour Party to modernise, that is, to shun Militant, fail to support the miners' strike and succeed in supporting the Gulf War. Despite pangs of conscience O'Farrell carries on with Labour, 'my party right or left'.

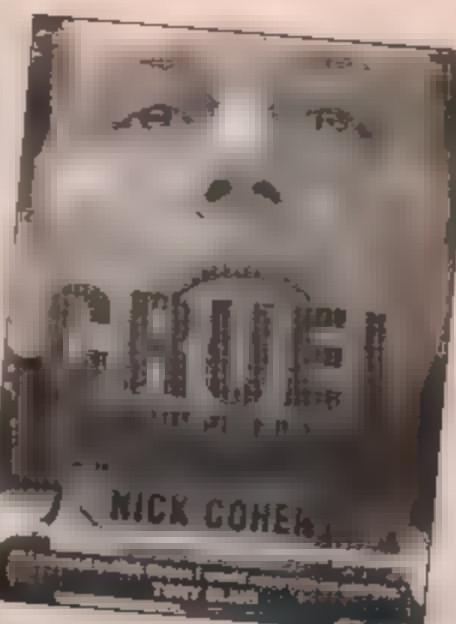
As an activist, O'Farrell experienced the door-to-door tramps round council estates, the meetings of six comrades or fewer in draughty halls, that may be familiar to readers. He describes his own progress from student on the dole to well-paid middle-class lefty with a certain honesty and some recognition that those he left behind on the council estates are having it as tough now as when the hated Tories were in government.

This is where Nick Cohen comes in as the chronicler of New Labour in government. His articles cover Labour's 'third way' – the privatisation of prisons, the introduction of the market into schooling, the 'ethical' foreign policy including relations with Suharto of Indonesia and above all, the relentless self-aggrandisement and greed of the new elite.

Nick Cohen is an excellent investigative journalist who searches out the truth and tells the real record of the businessmen and politicians this government is so keen to make alliances with. He reveals the links that bind the consultancy and public relations firms to the 'high profile' high earners whom Blair's government

adores. Deanne Julius, the ex CIA agent, was brought onto the Bank of England's Monetary Committee by Gordon Brown for £130,000 a year and Chris Whittle of Edison, the education business, was invited to bid for Education Action Zones in Britain. The Labour government's grovelling admiration for capitalist enterprise is evident with every breath it takes. Cohen quotes Michael Barber, adviser to Education Minister Blunkett, in his sycophantic praise of the corporate mission. 'Successful companies are uniquely able to manage change and innovation' and 'business does have a proven record of raising academic standards in the United States'. This is not only untrue, but the record shows that businessmen like Chris Whittle exploit schoolchildren shamelessly. His Channel One Station was provided free to schools in the USA on condition that 90% of children watch a 10-minute news package with a two-minute advertising slot each day. Follow-up research showed that the consumption of junk food and right-wing Republican views were measurable results of this compulsory brain-washing. Enterprising indeed!

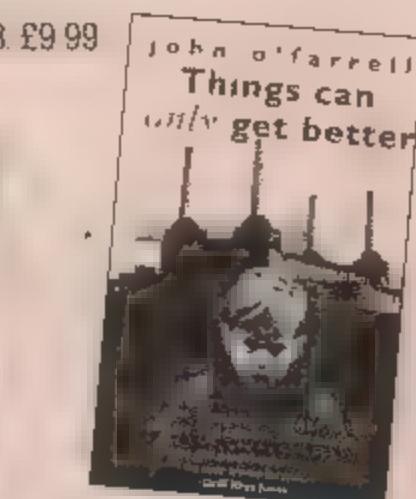
Cohen takes up the story of the poor left behind on the housing estates and mean streets of the inner cities after John O'Farrell moved on to a middle-class income and a big house in Fulham. For large sections of the working class the 'miserable years' continue. Jack Straw's vicious policies of discipline and punishment are married to Blunkett's tight-arsed education system and both are to impose flexible low pay casualisation of working conditions on the poor. The courting of the Murdoch press by Labour is



described in full by Cohen as both a tactic of control and a grovelling worship of financial success. It serves several functions.

We thus have an elite that embraces populism and forces the most degraded aspects of equally elitist corporations' populist diet and journalism on everyone's children but their own. Teaching children how to spell "Chicken McNuggets" will not, I suspect, help them make sense of cant'.

Nick Cohen's journalism is of the most brilliant kind and this book is highly recommended to anyone who wants to keep track of the most vicious right-wing government this century and who needs convincing that New Labour is the friend of corporate capitalism. Unlike that other brilliant journalist of our time John Pilger, however, Cohen has yet to learn just how vile British imperialism is. Unlike Pilger Cohen did not oppose the NATO war in the former Yugoslavia. 'Despite everything', he wrote, 'I still hope NATO takes Kos-



ovo. *Cruel Britannia* was published before the war, but there is enough here to have been able to predict which way Cohen would swing. His ripe humanism comes across when he writes of the modern vices of 'turning a blind eye to violence against minorities' or, discussing British negotiations over handing Hong Kong back to China, he says of Lord Howe: 'Faced with a choice between siding with freedom or repression, Howe chose repression'. He retains the utopian indifference of the public commentator to the realities of the struggles faced by individuals, communities and nations who are oppressed by the power of capital. The real tasks of those who struggle against the global market so roundly condemned by Nick Cohen will be untidy, painful and bitter. There will be no power bloc interested in justice for the oppressed. We will have to do it for ourselves and the fight for the greater good may be a lot more messy than some humanitarians will be able to stomach.'

It is nevertheless, essential, that writers like Nick Cohen continue to fight the good journalistic fight for truth and that their anger at the lies and hypocrisy of the rich enlighten our days.

Susan Davidson

Things can only get better

■ A play by Richard Roques, Etcetera Theatre, Oxford Arms, Camden High Street, London NW1 2B July-8 August
7.15pm Tuesday-Saturday
6.15pm Sunday; £8.50 £5.50 concessions

Things can only get better is a political play with a message for everyone who loves, or hates, the Labour Party. It is aimed both at those who have remained dedicated to the possibility that socialist change in this country might just might be brought about by electing a party which has over the years ditched every last vestige of lip-service to socialist politics, and at those who, like the author, know that Labour never has been and never will be socialist.

The play tells the stories of three characters. Lillian Sanderson, an Old Labour socialist who stands in a safe Tory seat, never expecting to be elected but becomes one of Blair's babes in the end of 1997; her son Nick, a rebellious 16-year-old, discovering his own sexuality and politics; and Simon, Lillian's brother-in-law – a determined adherent of Old Labour, who grows progressively disenchanted, following the election, as Blair and Lillian move further and further to the right.

Lilian Sanderson is outstanding as Lillian. Although she is actually on stage for the least time, she holds the

piece together, as we watch her parliamentary career progress, while her personal life and political principles fall apart. Mark Lawrence as Nick (frighteningly attired for the opening scenes in a Rock Around the Blockade T shirt) and Ignatius Anthony as Simon also deliver strong performances.

Richard Roques' script interweaves political commentary on the events of the two years since Labour swept to power with insight into the twists and turns in the lives of his characters. This is a partisan play; it takes a stand and makes a point. But it is not a polemic and, as with the writer's previous work, the dialogue is skilfully constructed to ensure the production is neither simplistic nor one-dimensional.

Consequently, even while she sells out her own principles, Lillian can still inspire sympathy as a mother rejected by her teenage children. And Nick, who begins as the dissenting voice of revolutionary youth embraces gay 'life-style' politics and with it the capitalism of the pink pound. Although both are searching for answers, neither can find one to the questions at the heart of the play. Only Simon knows the beginning of the answer – 'socialism, good old, unfashionable, unworkable, unelectable, socialism'. And although he doesn't yet know how to begin to work towards that answer the one thing he does learn by the end of the play is where not to look in the Labour Party.

Nick Jameson

A revolution can only be born out of culture and ideas

■ Speech by Fidel Castro, 1998, reprinted as a pamphlet by the Cuban Embassy, London

Castro was speaking outside the University of Venezuela, 40 years after he last spoke there encouraging Venezuelan support for revolutionary change in Cuba. He returned to give this speech as president of Cuba in the year that marked the 40th anniversary of a revolution that deposed US puppet Fulgencio Batista and liberated the people of Cuba. His speech takes the form of advice from one who has spent his lifetime fighting for socialism. He tells us that 'today all of mankind needs to be saved. And it is not our task. It is yours.'

This task has been made all the more difficult by the fact that we now live in a 'unipolar' world, that after the collapse of the eastern bloc there is no remaining strong challenge to US imperialism. In Cuba they have

survived the threat from their northern neighbour even though their ally the USSR has been gone for eight years and the economy has been through the special period. The US has also intensified the economic blockade of Cuba with the hope of



defeating socialism in that country. Castro describes this as 'economic warfare' where the US forbids the export of even one 'cap or kerchief' from a US company, even if it is based in a totally different country.

Castro attributes Cuba's resistance to the ideas of the Cuban people. The continuation of the revolution did not happen because an oppressive government used force to suppress a

counter-revolution but because of the commitment of the Cuban people that the revolution continues. Those who sow ideas have no need to suppress the people ever. That is why Cuba has been able to resist US attempts to culturally and ideologically dominate the world. Castro comments that practically everything circulating in the world today is sheer Yankee-made canned culture. Cuban society which is based on the consensus of the people, offers an alternative to this in its resistance to US oppression.

Castro backs up his argument with impressive statistics about what the revolution has achieved. That during the special period, for example, infant mortality went down by 30% in one year from 10 to 7.1 per 1,000 live births, that not a single teacher lost their job and that new medical colleges are being opened.

Castro is right, however, when he says that Cuba could not just say 'Do what we did' because our revolution needs to come from our ideas and be part of our culture. For the revolution to change the US-dominated world, 'neither nuclear weapons nor big wars are needed, but ideas'. Castro even quotes Jose Marti to the effect that 'trenches of ideas are worth more than trenches of stone'. Our greatest weapon in this struggle is therefore, our ideology. Our ideas are needed to make the revolution and our ideas are needed to keep the revolution alive. This is because ideas are indestructible and can never be beaten.

Matthew MacDonald

Our last issue came out just before the end of the imperialist onslaught on Yugoslavia. FRFI supporters had been active on street events and at numerous demonstrations attacking the role of the Labour Party and the Labour government in leading the NATO war alliance – much to the disgust of most of the left. At the final demonstration on 5 June, SWP members vociferously condemned impromptu speeches we made at the final rally. All their slogans had been about NATO, with not a mention of the Labour Party or the Labour government. So when the following day we attended a conference on War and Militarism organised by *New Left Review* and *International Socialism* (journal of the Socialist Workers Party) we knew what to expect. Leading SWP members were forced to defend the Labour Party left and justify the SWP's alliance with the Labour Party.

John Rees, editor of *International Socialism*, told the conference that the cause of the war was 'the collapse of Stalinist states'. He stressed the defence of oil pipelines from the Caspian Sea to western Europe as the main purpose of the war. However, he neglected to mention that at the end of those pipelines was British Petroleum, the biggest firm in the consortium exploiting the Caspian region.

Events

NORTHWEST

BLOCKADE

Sunday 19 September, 2.00pm
Public Meeting: Cuba in the frontline against imperialism
Bangor Street Community Centre
Brookhouse, Blackburn

LONDON

Wednesday 25 August, 7.30pm
Public meeting
Globalisation with a human face
Wednesday 15 September, 7.30pm
FRFI Readers & Supporters Group

Both at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube)

Saturday 21 August
Showing of Panther video followed by discussion of Black Panther Party
Venue to be arranged

For further details tel: 0171 837 7886

Alex Callinicos continued by overlooking the fact that Britain is the second biggest holder of overseas assets after the USA and second only to that country as arms trader to the world. He told us that 'Blair represents a ruling class that has lost its empire and so can afford to speak more blithely of intervention.' Committing 13,000 troops, to date, to the occupation of Kosovo is no 'blithe' intervention.

He then condemned our criticisms of Labour by accusing the RCG of wanting to ban the Labour Party left from anti-war campaigns. We explained the reality was that those on the left who opposed Labour were the ones being banned from platforms and denied

democracy in the campaign. Demonstrating in this instance, that they practice what they preach SWP members attempted to stop us selling 'Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism' during the dinner break.

From *New Left Review* Tariq Ali emphasised the prevailing strategy: 'Labour Party MPs on the platform give us confidence.' But why were there so few? Callinicos had the answer: 'Many Labour backbenchers opposed the war, but were too depressed to do anything about it.' We just nod. Had he changed 'confidence' for 'respectability' Tariq Ali would have hit the mark.

Later, Lindsey German, editor of *Socialist Review*, explained that 'it is a fallacy that there is no contradiction between people who vote Labour and its leadership... a large proportion of Labour Party members opposed the war.' She concluded 'we must take on the politics of the Blairites.' We can say that in reality Labour Party members didn't give a damn about the war. British forces have been involved in 96 armed actions overseas since 1945, and Labour has supported every one of them except Suez in 1956 when it sided with the USA. It is not a matter of 'Blairites' but the entire character of Labour, old or new. The SWP has to peddle these myths to justify its policy of clinging to yesterday's failures and the threads of respectability they afford.

Tariq Ali was also to claim that the war had been a disaster for NATO. Another fiction: it would only have been a disaster if the alliance had broken apart. The fact is, it did not. Even in Greece, where 98% of the people opposed the war, preventing NATO materiel and troops crossing their land to the war zone, the social democratic

PASOK government still committed troops to NATO and today remains in government.

Finally, both Tariq Ali and the SWP agreed that, in Tariq Ali's words, 'In Britain there is the beginning of a strong anti-war movement'. In truth it was and is pathetic for two reasons: first, because much of the Labour Party left supported the war, and second, because the anti-war left, whether inside or outside Labour, refused to honestly and openly confront the government. When anyone did condemn Labour, they were attacked. Tariq Ali was once a revolutionary. Now he is older and more prosperous, such ambitions have long disappeared, and he can reserve his bile for those who



Fighting capitalist lies...

would attack the cosy alliance he and his ilk in the SWP have established with the Labour Party.

As we report in our Rock around the Blockade round-up, the SWP reserves its vitriol not for the Labour Party but for the Cuban revolution. It is the only issue for which they can whip up any visceral feelings.

In contrast, comrades in the Midlands held a successful dayschool in Lincoln to coincide with the international protests against Third World Debt. A recurring theme of the dayschool was the hope that Cuba gives the world by calling for the debt to be cancelled and in leading the oppressed nations to resist imperialism and neo-liberal policies.

Speakers from RCG, Pathfinder/Militant, Oxfam and others examined the debt from the perspective of imperialist domination and exploitation of the

oppressed countries. Topics included the origins of imperialism and the present capitalist crisis and imperialist aggression in Yugoslavia and Iraq. The important point was made that the Third World debt is just one part of imperialist exploitation, so that cancelling debt had to be championed in an anti-imperialist context. In the final session, Robert Clough led a blistering attack on the Labour Party and its bloody role in the war on Yugoslavia. He pointed out that the Cuban call to indict Javier Solana for war crimes was an implicit condemnation of all European social democracy and was in stark contrast to the position of the bulk of the British left.

The whole dayschool was a great success and inspired many of those present to redouble their efforts to defend Cuba and build an anti-imperialist movement in this country.



ROCK ON WITH ROCK AROUND THE BLOCKADE

Rocking over the summer

Over the May Bank holiday, we were presented with a fantastic opportunity in London at the Barbican Centre's *Cuba Presente* arts festival, where our stall raised over £500 towards a sound system for the youth of Cuba and attracted a lot of interest from people keen to get involved in our work on Cuba.

This led to lively campaign meetings and political discussion over the last two months. Rock around the Blockade also held a stall outside the SWP's Marxism events in central London in early July to refute SWP lies about Cuba (see separate article).

At the end of July, we took two car-loads of activists up to the WOMAD Festival at Reading and, in the blistering heat, raised £255 and attracted tremendous support.

In the Midlands, Rock around the Blockade and RCG members spoke at the Breaking the Chains dayschool on imperialism and debt. The group has also been discussing Cuba's call for the indictment of Javier Solana. As well as political discussions, the Midlands are organising fund-raising events over the summer and stalls in Lincoln, Birmingham, Nottingham, and Leicester. A stall will also be held regularly



Bad luck for Bacardi Day, Friday 13 August!

All around the country we have also been busy in the lead-up to the official launch of our Boycott Bacardi campaign on 13 August, which will be the focus of much of our work over the next period. The hostility of the Bacardi organisation to Cuba represents the cutting edge of the vicious and illegal blockade of Cuba by US imperialism. Bacardi also signifies the dominance of the multinationals and their collusion with imperialist governments against the interests of humanity.



Join our boycott campaign: get members of your college, union or organisation to sign our petition, send in for our 'Boycott Bacardi' stickers and action pack. Boycott Bacardi products! We will be organising stalls, publicity events and direct action. Rock around the Blockade events are listed below – so get involved!

We will be sending a brigade of activists to Guantanamo in Cuba in spring 2000. To find out more about the brigade, contact the campaign.

Events

IN AND AROUND LONDON

Sunday 8 August
Stall in Camden Market, 2pm. Meet opposite tube station on right – by phone boxes and near the man shaking a tambourine!

Friday 13 August
anti-Bacardi protest.
Contact the campaign for details.

Saturday 14/Sunday 15 August
fundraising bonanza.

Monday 16 August, 8pm
Boycott Bacardi campaign meeting

Saturday 28 August:
Rock around the Blockade goes to the seaside – to hold a stall at the Cuba festival on Brighton beach.

Sunday 29 August:
Notting Hill carnival. Meet at 11am outside King's Cross tube station.

Contact the campaign in London at BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3DX or tel 0171 837 1688.

MIDLANDS

For details of stalls tel: 01400 230151

NORTHWEST

Sunday 19 September 2pm
Public Meeting: Cuba in the frontline against imperialism
Bangor Street Community Centre
Brookhouse, Blackburn

Saturday 28 August
Stall at World Best Festival, Morecambe from 12.30pm
For details tel: 01254 579605

SWP and Cuba: does the CIA write its speeches?

The hatred that the SWP has for the Cuban revolution was on display at their Marxism conference in July, which was also attended by a number of RATB supporters. The session's main speaker ridiculed the revolution, belittling the gains in health and education, recycling old tales about the imprisonment of those with AIDS. He did not bother to mention the 40-year old US blockade. He called Castro a dictator who suppressed democratic rights and the freedom of speech.

Then came the 'discussion' session. Or rather it didn't. SWP backs queued up to vilify what the Cuban people had achieved, calling for the revolution's destruction. The CIA would have been proud of them. RATB comrades who put their hands up to speak were ignored completely. Finally, when the chair closed the session, an RATB comrade stood up to refute the lies. Members of the audience called for her to have the right to speak. They were treated to a lesson in SWP 'freedom of speech' as SWP goons threw her and other RATB members out.

Many of the audience came to the RATB stall outside to express their disgust. We now understand that SWP branches have had to 'discuss' Cuba to get the line right. We believe there are some SWP members who support Cuba. We call on them to get active with Rock around the Blockade.



CHOOSE THE

RCG

If you believe that the treachery of the opportunist British labour and trade union movement must be challenged, then there is no alternative – Join the RCG!

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Poole & Mills: still fighting for justice

Thank you once again for the write-up in the latest issue of FRCI. I thought you should know what is going on with our fight, plus you may be able to help us some more.

As you have already reported, ex-Detective Inspector Gladding lost his libel case against *Trial and Error* (T&E) and David Jessel in October 1998. Gladding prevented a vital defence witness, Neville Jukes, from giving evidence at our murder trial in 1990 and in their programme on our case, Jessel and T&E accused him of perjury and perverting the course of justice. Gladding then sued them for libel.

Their defence was that they were justified in making such statements as Gladding had committed perjury and had perverted the course of justice. The ours in the libel trial was then on them to prove this to be true. The trial judge instructed the jury that the evidence must be of the very highest standard and overwhelming, due to DI Gladding being a police officer. Well, it must have been more than enough because the jury was unanimous in deciding in favour of T&E and David Jessel.

LETTERS

Write to FRCI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX e-mail: rcfrci@easynet.co.uk website: http://www.rcfrci.easynet.co.uk

Covering up for Corbyn

Jeremy Corbyn MP left the Labour Party, as David Howarth suggests [PRFI June/July], where should he go?

Whatever one thinks of the Labour Party, what other organisation at the moment offers an equivalent high-profile platform inside or outside of Parliament? Or outside of London? There is not much point in ideological perfection, in perfect isolation. Since the revolution will probably not break out tomorrow, what effective path should a socialist MP take? I do not quite see near-oblivion as a real option.

Keep reading the papers with the real news of the world, but temper aspirations with some sense of reality, David?

GRAEME KEMP
Surry

Graeme seems to miss the point. I wasn't trying to persuade or embarrass Jeremy Corbyn into leaving the Labour Party.

I was trying to show the opportunism of Corbyn since some regard him as a socialist.

What difference would it have made to the education system if Corbyn's son had gone to a comprehensive school? How would it benefit the thousands of working-class children who aren't given a choice in the type of education they receive? Corbyn's ex-wife presumably understood the reality that the Labour Party is committed to a two-tier education system, and wanted the best option for her son – a middle-class education. To advance a decent comprehensive education for all, necessarily involves a political battle against the Labour Party, which the overwhelming majority of the left show no sign of doing. Instead of behaving like a socialist, Corbyn turned his marital split into a publicity stunt.

Graeme points out that there isn't a ready-made revolutionary party in Britain, which I agree with. The question that needs to be answered is why? Is there no poverty in Britain? Are the living standards of the working-class endlessly improving? Is capitalism meeting their needs? Clearly

not. The answer was provided by Lenin over 80 years ago, who showed that socialists split into opportunistic and revolutionary wings, the opportunist wing having its economic and social roots in imperialism. Lenin also identified a more dangerous trend, those who vacillate between opportunism and radicalism, but are in reality only a fig-leaf for opportunism (Lenin – *Opportunism and the collapse of the Second International*). This is not 'ideological perfection' but a standard to judge the present actions of those who call themselves socialists. Robert Clough's book *Labour: A party fit for imperialism* shows that the Labour Party has always defended the interests of British imperialism, which the most of the left hide behind lame excuses and myths.

Corbyn, Benn, Livingstone, Galloway etc are necessary to the Labour Party and the left. Firstly, they act as a buffer for the Labour Party to deflect criticism and to lead 'opposition' to Labour policy into channels acceptable to Labour. Secondly, they disguise the left's support for Labour, whatever it does. The recent war in Yugoslavia provided a clear example of their role.

David Howarth

Britain backs East Timor terror

Britain has recently expressed concern to Indonesia that British-made Hawks jets may have been used in East Timor. Touched by humanitarian concern, Foreign Office minister Geoff Horn reminded Jakarta that the fighter bombers were only sold on condition that they were not deployed in the region.

So where did they think they were going to be used? As if the British government, who have just taken part in the bombing of Yugoslavian military and civilian targets alike, could care less about what the Indonesian military do to the East Timorese! It's even less likely that the Indonesian government, responsible for so much oppression in the forms of murders, torture and 'disappearances' in East Timor, would be true to their word.

JOHN WALMSLEY
Nelson, Lancs

What we stand for

The Revolutionary Communist Group fights for a society which produces for people's needs, not profit – that is, a socialist society.

Capitalist society is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling capitalist class, for profit. Internationally, imperialism divides the world into oppressed and oppressor nations: the majority lives in poverty, while a tiny minority squanders unprecedented wealth. By restricting production worldwide to the narrow limits of profit-making, the basic needs of the majority of humanity cannot be fulfilled.

In Britain today more than four million are unemployed with many people – women in particular – trapped in low wage, part-time jobs. 25% of the population – the majority women and children – live in poverty, with lower wages, lower benefit and fewer social services. Meanwhile, money-grabbers in the newly-privatised industries (like the water authorities) and banks amass more profits and pay their directors inflated salaries. The RCG supports the struggle of the working class to defend and improve its living standards.

Racist attacks are on the increase. The police do nothing to defend black people against attack, and instead blame black people for crime. At the same time, Britain's racist immigration laws are used to harass, detain and deport black people. The RCG fights against racism and fascism in all its forms. We support the right of black people to organise and defend themselves against racist attack. We oppose all immigration laws.

While the working class bears the brunt of the crisis, new laws like the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act and anti-trade union legislation have been introduced to criminalise the right to protest. The RCG opposes all anti-working class laws and fights to defend democratic rights – the right to organise and protest.

Britain is an imperialist country. Ireland is Britain's oldest colony and the nationalist working class of the Six Counties are subject to military occupation and brutal repression. The RCG supports the struggle of the Irish people for self-determination and calls for the immediate withdrawal of British troops.

Internationally, oppressed nations are driven into poverty and debt by imperialism as multinationals extort superprofits from the labour of the poor. Throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America and eastern Europe the effects of the free market are obvious – low wages, appalling work conditions, poverty and starvation for the mass of the people; environmental degradation, corruption and repression in government. The RCG supports the struggle of all oppressed people against imperialism.

The RCG supports socialist Cuba and condemns the illegal US blockade. We fight actively in defence of the Cuban revolution.

In the drive for profits, the needs of human beings and the environment are secondary to the profits of multinational companies. The RCG supports the struggle to defend the environment.

The Labour Party is a ruling class party which defends capitalism in power. It has never defended the interests of the working class. The RCG fights for the independent interests of the whole working class. We do not support any of the pro-capitalist parties in elections.

The RCG fights against prejudice and bigotry, which are used by the ruling class to divide and weaken the working class. We oppose all discrimination against black people, women, lesbians, gay men and people with disabilities.

The defence of the working class and oppressed can only come from the working class organising democratically and independently in its own interests, in Britain and internationally. The Revolutionary Communist Group stands for the rebirth of a socialist movement internationally to destroy capitalism and imperialism and replace them with a socialist society, organised to defend the interests of the working class and oppressed. Join us.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX Telephone: 0171 837 1686. Website: http://www.rcfrci.easynet.co.uk

Hypocrisy in sex education

Britain has the highest pregnancy rate in Europe. In June the government announced a £60m programme to tackle this problem, promising improved sex education, contraceptive services and support for teenage mothers to halve conception rates in under-18s within ten years.

On the face of it, such a programme is to be welcomed. But taken alongside Labour's attacks on lone parent benefit and its proposal to consign teenage mothers to 'hostels', it is not too cynical to sound a note of caution about just how the programme is to be operated. We need only look to the United States – from where New Labour draws inspiration for so much of its welfare policy.

Every year one million teenagers in the US – 10% of those aged 15-19 – become pregnant. Federal government sees this as a worrying drain on its social expenditure budget and has pledged funds, under the guise of welfare legislation, for the development of sex education in schools. In all, \$400 million will be made available for a new curriculum which has the single aim of teaching abstinence from sexual intercourse until marriage. No practical advice, no contraception, just sermonising. Meanwhile, of course, welfare payments to single parents have been slashed.

Substantial evidence shows that only concrete information,

contraceptive advice and access to contraception lead to a reduction in pregnancy rates amongst teenagers. For instance, in Oslo, teenage abortion rates halved from 1988 levels after the introduction of an integrated package, including young people's sexual health clinics and age-appropriate sex education. Now is the chance for the

government to show whether it is serious about reducing pregnancy rates and supporting young women in this country, or only in a hypocritical nod to Victorian values that will keep Middle England happy and teenage pregnancy rates rising.

NOREEN LANE
North London

PRISONERS' JUSTICE DAY

CLOSE DOWN WOODHILL CONTROL UNIT!

Demonstration at Woodhill, Saturday 7 August. Meet 1.30pm at HMP Woodhill, Tattenhoe St, Milton Keynes. From London: meet at 11am at Euston BR station concourse. Buses from Milton Keynes Central station to Safeway Superstore

FIGHT RACISM
FIGHT IMPERIALISM

HANDS OFF IRELAND!

'Peace Agreement' reaches a dead end

'The argument that the present political process can deliver real and meaningful change has been significantly undermined by the course of events over the past 15 months. This culminated in the failure last week to establish the political institutions set out in the Good Friday Agreement...'

'Those who demand the decommissioning of IRA weapons lend themselves in the current political context, inadvertently or otherwise, to the failed agenda which seeks the defeat of the IRA.'

IRA statement on the peace process, released 21 July 1999



Garvagh Road, 1999

The IRA statement, published in *An Phoblacht/Republican News* on 23 July, reflects growing Republican frustration with a Northern Ireland Peace Agreement which has come to a dead end. Blair's deadlines of first 30 June and then 15 July failed to force the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) into entering the power-sharing executive with Sinn Fein. During the course of the hectic, intense discussions, Blair and the British government were convinced that they would deliver IRA arms decommissioning. As Adams put it, they had stretched the Republican constituency to its limit: Blair called it a 'seismic shift'. For Trimble and the UUP this isn't enough - they want arms decommissioning before power-sharing. BOB SHEPHERD reports.

Even the enabling legislation, published by the British government - on 12 July, ironically - with the supposed intent of acting as the framework for setting up the executive, wasn't enough to shift the UUP. In this legislation, Blair's new 'blueprint', the Good Friday Peace Agreement was amended to allow Sinn Fein to be excluded from the executive should the IRA fail to decommission. The sole aim of this amendment was to strengthen the position of Trimble; centering the debate on the failure to set up the power-sharing executive around IRA decommissioning hides what is really happening on the streets of the Six Counties. It conveniently hides which section of society is under attack and where the violence is coming from. During June, leading up to the talks and the beginning of the loyalist marching season, there was an escalating number of attacks on nationalist homes and communities.

- 1 June: a petrol bomb was thrown at the home of a 63-year-old Catholic woman in Strabane
- 4 June: a Catholic solicitor's office in Lisburn was set on fire
- 5 June: a pipe-bomb thrown through the living-room window killed 59-year-old Elizabeth O'Neill in Portadown; a second pipe-bomb

attack took place on a house near the O'Neill's family home; there was another pipe-bomb attack on a Catholic home in Hilltown, Co Down

- 6 June: families in Twinbrook, Belfast were forced to flee after two pipe-bombs were found next to Acacia Avenue Flats; two pipe-bombs were thrown in the Short Strand area of Belfast
- 7 June: a pipe-bomb was found outside St Mary's primary school in Harryville; there was a petrol bomb attack on a Catholic home in Antrim town
- 19 June: Catholic homes in north Belfast were attacked following an Orange parade
- 29 June: a pipe-bomb was pushed through the letter box of a Catholic home in south Belfast

On 28 June the fascist loyalist gangs known as the Orange Volunteers and the Red Hand Defenders issued a joint statement which declared that they 'will not stand idly by and watch as our culture, heritage and religion are attacked'. The Orange Order applied for the right to hold 25 marches in Portadown between 28 June and 24 July.

The Orange Order marches on 4 July, at Drumcree, and 12 July, across the Six Counties, were, in contrast to previous years, relatively low-key. There is an expectation that in response to its so-called 'responsible

attitude' this year at Drumcree, the British government will allow the Orange Order to march down the Garvagh Road later in the year. This 'responsible attitude' didn't stop loyalist marchers on 3 July from attacking a human rights activist from the USA outside a church near the Garvagh Road. They broke her wrist and cut her head in the attack. On the evening of 4 July groups of loyalists threatened local nationalists and international observers at the bottom of the Garvagh Road.

On 12 July, following the banning of the Orange march down the Lower Ormeau Road, the Orange Order provocatively moved their main Belfast rally to the Ormeau Park, next to the Lower Ormeau Road. Following this rally, Orange marchers attacked nationalist residents in Belfast's Springfield Road who were protesting against what was the second Orange march through their area in three weeks. The RUC did nothing to stop the Orange marchers' attack, confronting the nationalist protesters instead. In the run-up to 12 July in north Belfast in the Graymount area, two nationalist homes were set on fire on 7 July. On 9 July, another home was attacked. On 10 July a family of five narrowly escaped death when their home was fire-bombed. Four pipe-bombs were

found in the area and there has been a constant stream of attacks against nationalist homes in the nearby Longlands area.

This is the reality of what is happening in nationalist working class communities across the north of Ireland. A continuous stream of sectarian attacks from loyalist terror gangs with no real defence from the Republican movement. It's no wonder that Adams realised he might have 'stretched the Republican constituency' too far in his commitment to Blair on decommissioning and has begun to backtrack a little.

Not only is the 'peace agreement' at a dead end, so is the peace strategy of Sinn Fein.

Blair says that the whole process is now 'parked' until October, when another attempt will be made to set up an executive. In the meantime Senator George Mitchell has been brought back in an effort to square the circle. If it is successful and Sinn Fein get their two ministerial positions then, as Tony McIntyre, a former POW, writes:

'Not only will Republicans be consigned to administer British rule for the foreseeable future (but) the acceptance by them of the principle of decommissioning has served to delegitimise and criminalise the previous Republican resistance to that rule.'

30 years since Labour sent British troops into the Six Counties



Derry, 13 August 1969: the RUC had failed to recapture the Bogside and feared the spread of insurrection

est at socialists...

'To say that the immediate enemy in Ulster is the British troops is incorrect...' (*Socialist Worker*, 21 August, 11 and 18 September 1969)

In its desire to keep its alliance with the left of the Labour Party and to defend its own middle-class position, the demand for the withdrawal of British troops from abroad was dropped from the 'Where we stand' column in *Socialist Worker*. A demand that is still missing 30 years later!

The Militant Tendency (then inside the Labour Party), now known as the Socialist Party in England and the dominant force in the Scottish Socialist Party, supported the introduction of troops under the guise of concern lest there be a bloodbath. To this day they continue to court loyalty.

A slaughter would have followed in comparison with which the bloodletting in Belfast would have paled into insignificance if the Labour gov-

ernment had not intervened with British troops.' (*Militant*, September 1969)

The Communist Party, through its newspaper *The Morning Star*, called for decisive intervention from London - it called on British imperialism to reform the loyalist police state! (*Morning Star*, 4 and 15 August 1969)

Throughout the 30 years of the present struggle for Irish liberation against the forces of British imperialism, all these organisations have scabbed on the struggle of the nationalist working class. They have been determined to defend their middle-class positions of privilege against the interests of the oppressed. They have consistently attacked the armed struggle of the IRA, while equally consistently calling for a vote for Labour ever since. Now, without fail, they support the IRA's ceasefire and push the myth that Blair and the Labour government have an interest in defending the position of the nationalist working class.

30 years of the Irish struggle has shown us that the Labour Party is a reactionary, blood-soaked defender of British imperialism and that the British left are servile defenders of Labour.

Bob Shepherd